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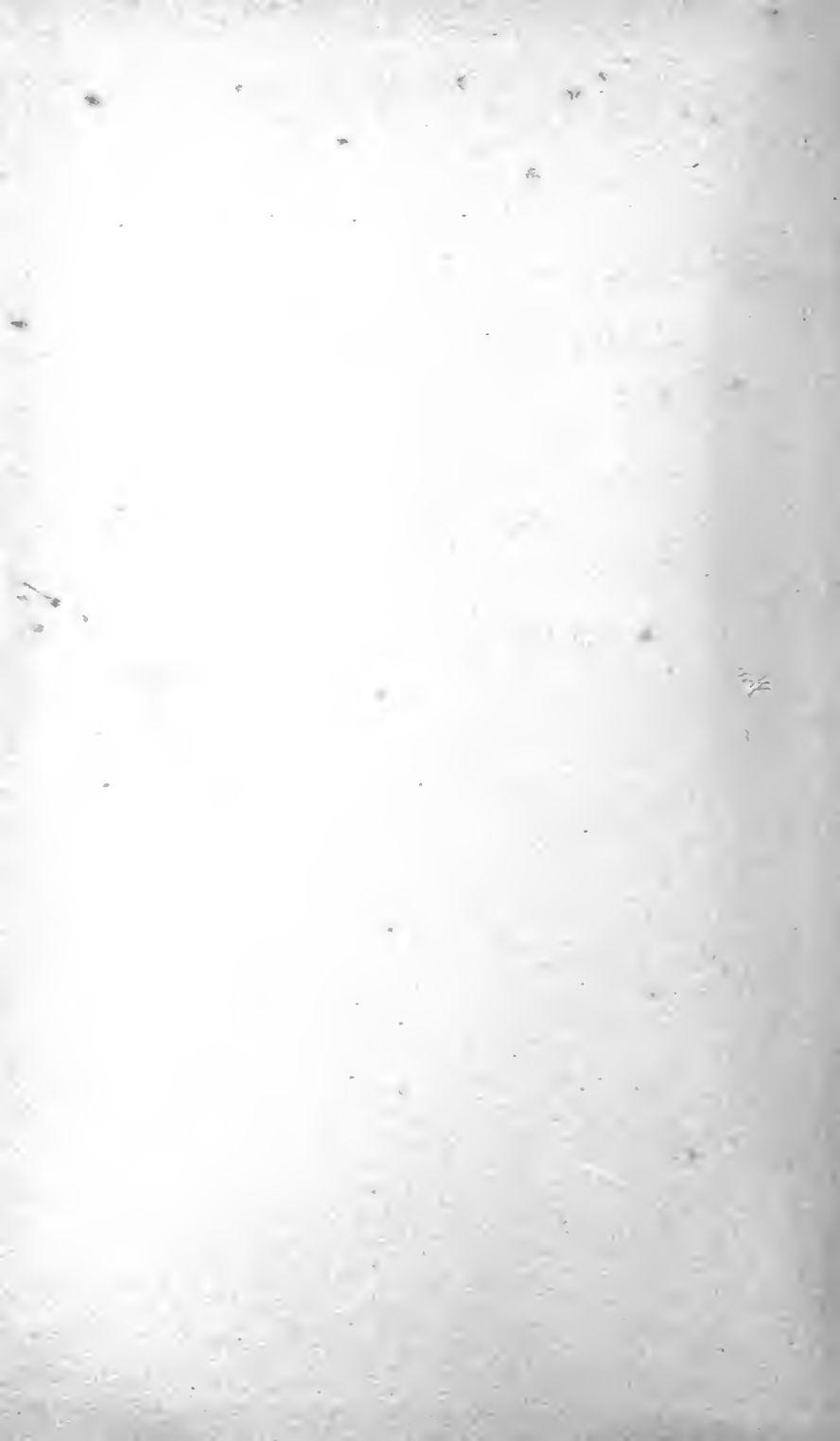
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MANUFACTURER



MANUFACTURER

by

FREDERIC LEE

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TO
MY FATHER

‘ And of every true Knight in the Chivalric
ages, the first thing history tells you is, that he
never kept treasure for himself.’

RUSKIN.

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INTRODUCTION

EXCESSIVE modesty is quite as depressing as too much self-esteem. Though I do not wish to embarrass the reader by an attitude of humility that suggests an exhibition of the art of angling, I must in all honesty affirm that no critic can be more conscious of the faults of this book than its author. It is, however, my first-born, and though deformed I have the parents' illogical belief in the possibility of its usefulness.

I can imagine the professional writer saying: 'This man has no qualifications for Authorship, his work is faulty and his thoughts confused.' 'He would be far better employed minding his own business.' It may be so, but should we not lose something of value if we refused to listen to those who were unable to claim expert knowledge of the subjects under general discussion?

The intelligent workman has often something to say that is interesting and instructive. There is a freshness in the point of view gained from long contact with the realities of life.

In this little island millions of Englishmen live side by side with every facility for social contact, and yet, how little we know of each other's lives. As you pass through the ever-growing built-up areas have you not wondered how and where people who inhabit them earn their livings?

One of the undesirable and perhaps dangerous results of this modern development is this tendency to shut up the various classes of society in watertight compartments.

With the decay of village life in which all classes met frequently and naturally, we have lost a valuable means of

social contact. The modern system of housing which segregates the professional and working classes is wholly bad and anti-social.

This development has accelerated alarmingly since Disraeli wrote: 'We want to put an end to that political and social exclusiveness which we believe to be the bane of this country. It is not so much to the action of laws as to the influence of manners that we must look—but how are manners to influence men if they are divided into classes—if the population of a country becomes a body of sections, a group of hostile garrisons?'

It seems that as the theory of democracy becomes more generally accepted and understood in this country, its practice is becoming more difficult.

The object of this book is to bridge the widening gap between the different groups of our people by presenting a picture of one at least of the types that play a part in our social structure. I have tried to draw as faithfully as I can a picture of a normal manufacturer. I have attempted to present in a simple form the difficulties, hopes, and possible compensations that go to make up such a life. I have dwelt on the human side of the picture because there is more than enough already written about the science of production.

It seems to me that the success of democratic government depends on the understanding that exists between the various classes that make up the nation as a whole.

Sympathy and friendliness generally come with a knowledge of the other fellow's life and difficulties.

There is something too artificial and un-English in the Statutory familiarity which expresses itself in addressing one another as Comrade. When we really are comrades there is no need to talk about it. In the meantime let us stay by the way and have a chat with our neighbours, for there is no doubt that if we do so we shall learn a great deal.

If the reader derives any pleasure from the following

pages—and I sincerely hope that he will—then let him thank the man behind the scenes who is the real producer.

I should never have written this book but for the help and sympathy of Arthur Bryant. I owe so much to his friendship that I cannot close this introduction without this inadequate effort to acknowledge my obligation to him, and by so doing liquidate a very small portion of my indebtedness.

PART ONE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER I

MY FATHER

IN the beginning, there was a plot of land on which potatoes grew, situated in a Midland village a few miles from a town recently described in the newspapers as the most prosperous in the British Empire.

There was also a young man, like so many young men, faced with the necessity of earning his living, but unlike many possessed of a passionate desire for complete independence. This young man was the son of another extremely independent character, also a manufacturer, who in his turn was the son or stepson of another very independent man, likewise a manufacturer, also a farmer. It will be observed that the last-mentioned gentleman combined the occupation of Farmer and Manufacturer. In the early history of industry this combination of pursuits was quite common. Moreover it seems that in the future leisured state there is a possibility that we shall see again this system of dual occupation. That however, is 'another' story.

My father started his business career at an early age with my grandfather. He worked very long hours. His hours were so long that after a chat with a visiting Factory Inspector he was delighted to be able to report to his father that the Inspector had said: 'My boy, you tell your father that if your hours are not reduced he will get into trouble.'

Looking back with the detachment that comes through the passage of years, it is quite obvious to me that two such

independent characters as those of my father and grandfather were not likely to pull together without very considerable friction. My father, restless and always eager for change and adventure, soon found the long hours of factory work insupportable. As a schoolboy he had already made two dashes for liberty and apparently the urge to break with things conventional still remained. It seems that the outstanding characteristic of these men was their extreme independence and enterprise. Each of them started in business independently, calmly walking away from the business commenced and established by their respective sires.

My father would tell with the greatest pleasure the story of his grandfather's first visit to foreign parts. The old man used to go periodically to London to obtain his orders from the large City merchants with whom he did his business. On one such visit he was informed by the Buyer of the Merchant House that there was no order for him. On inquiring the reason he was told that far better goods of the kind that he made were now being imported from Belgium. The old fellow, who could neither read nor write, bellowed at the Buyer: 'Where the Hell is Belgium?' On being told he forthwith left the merchant's office and set off for Belgium, returning in triumph some time later to his native village with the necessary machinery on which to make the goods that had cut him out of the market.

At the age of nineteen my father said good-bye to his life in a factory and with one or two kindred spirits set off for the United States of America. He had spent a good deal of his boyhood on his grandmother's farm which helped him to face the unknown life of the States with more confidence than would have been the case had his experience been entirely confined to life in a factory.

As a young man he was not robust, it must therefore have been a somewhat severe test of staying power to cross

the Atlantic sixty odd years ago, travelling steerage. The passage was rough and many of the foreign emigrants with whom he travelled were terrified or distressingly ill. My father remained in America for about three years during which time he employed himself in a variety of ways. At no time, however, did he have anything to do with commerce in the States, all his various occupations being out of doors.

He accepted almost any sort of work offered to him, and used to relate with glee how he bluffed himself into a post that consisted of breaking in and training young horses. The first horse on which he tried his knowledge of equitation threw him fourteen times. Bruised and humiliated he sat himself down to review his technique which appeared to be disastrously weak in some important respects. He solved the problem by farming out the more painful part of the horses' early training to a hardy nigger, contenting himself by putting the finish on at a later period.

In seeking manual work he was handicapped by his good looks and none too robust appearance, together with a pair of very shapely white hands that defied all his efforts to make them take on the horny substance usually associated with men who live by their hands. This last difficulty was finally overcome by wearing coarse gauntlets when applying for work.

My father never wearied of telling his family tales of his life in the States, a life full of movement and colour that made a profound impression on him. Part of his time there was spent in the Southern States, whilst the latter part was spent on the Western Plains.

As the Civil War had only finished about five years before he landed in the country, America was still a 'rough house' in which it was a simple matter to get into serious trouble. It was the Blue Grass region of Kentucky that tempted my father to remain in the States. There he seemed to have found the life that appealed to every instinct in his nature. As a young man I would listen with envy to his

tales of Coon hunts by moonlight in the Kentucky woods, picnics in the hills when the young people drove out in their buggies loaded with the best American fare to spend idle hours, shooting, fishing, and flirting, returning to finish the day on the veranda when this young Englishman played his part in the entertainment by singing songs of England and describing English life to an audience that never seemed to tire.

Though nominally engaged as an assistant on the farm, my father seemed to have been thoroughly spoilt by his kindly employers and their friends. He was a handsome youngster, full of life, and this coupled with his name that meant so much to Southern Americans, must have invested him with an air of romance that would appeal to the Kentucky people. However that may be, he seemed in after life to have looked back with grateful pleasure to his days in the Southern States. Reacting naturally and with intense enthusiasm to the life and culture of America's Southern States it was with life-long regret that he tore himself away to set out west with the friend who had left England with him, and from whom he was separated whilst at work in Kentucky.

Life in the west proved to be a very different thing from the lazy dreamy days of the Blue Grass region. Here my father and his friend signed on at the ranch of one Jack Bratt, and there proceeded to be initiated into the mysteries of a Western cowboy's life. Here they came up against realities good and hard. In those days the lariat and the six-shooter were in frequent use and had not been exploited as props for film dramas. No man dared call another a liar. No man who valued his life played fast and loose with that strange etiquette of the cowboy. My father's first praiseworthy but ill-advised effort to defend an old man who was being sorely bullied by a huge six-foot Prussian tough cost him a splintered jaw, the effects of which could be felt on his chin until his death.

On another occasion when he was sitting in a saloon, the sheriff and his men appeared to arrest a horse thief. He caused great amusement by his very rapid thought and action. The appearance of the sheriff was the signal for six-shooters, and as the first bullet whizzed through the air my father jumped to his feet and flung his chair through the window, leaping after it in his hurried search for cover. On returning to the saloon he found all quiet except for the laughter of the assembled company who assured him that he and the chair reached the ground outside at the same moment.

The life of a cowboy is very well in the summer, but during the winter there seems little to be said for it, unless you are made of the stuff that is entirely independent of comfort and safety. The 'young Englishman' soon discovered that if he were to keep his job in competition with men of infinitely superior physique, he must do it by the use of his head. As in the game of polo, the pony plays an important part in the work of a cowboy. A good pony knows his work and can assist his rider in keeping out of range of the critical eye of the boss of the ranch. For this reason my father accepted a pony that no one would ride owing to the difficulty of mounting, which was an impossible feat in the ordinary way.

This pony would be tied up between two wagons, and my father would mount from one of them. When the lashings were loosed away went the mount. Once in the saddle it was necessary to remain there until the work was done, even if it entailed taking one's meals in the saddle. This pony taught my father a great deal about cutting out a steer and enabled him to retain his job until such time as he took on the duties of cook for the camp. As children we would quite naturally ask him to tell us about the Indians. This picturesque and much written up race father would debunk in a manner distressing to our preconceived notions of the tribes that roamed the Western plains. "You would

not be very impressed by the noble Red Man," he would say, "if you saw him squatting in a ring round a pot eating warm giblets and cleaning them with his fingers as he ate them." They were apparently disliked by the cowboys on account of their habit of sponging on them in the winter, and rewarding their kindness by thefts of blankets and picking them off with bow and arrow in the early hours of the morning, when most of the camp lay sleeping.

Just before my father returned to England the Sioux Indian was again on the war-path and it was shortly after his return that Colonel Custer was killed by them.

The life of the cowboy though painted in bright and attractive colours by writers of certain fiction, was hard and very close to nature in those fast receding years. It is all very well for the young man with energy to spare, but my father would say that it is no life to grow old in. It was this thought together with the written appeals of his mother that finally persuaded him to leave the States and return to England where he was told a growing business was waiting for him. I think it was the year 1873 or thereabouts, that the young adventurer returned, a different man as may be imagined, from the raw youth that had set out three years previously. I have no information relative to the period that elapsed between my father's return from America and his commencement of his own business. Whatever the exact circumstances may have been, the decision to start in business for himself was arrived at, and it is of some interest to know in what manner he was equipped for such an undertaking.

I have been told that he took to himself a partner, and that the combined capital of the two amounted to a very insignificant sum, so small in fact that without a considerable amount of credit even a modest start was impossible. My father's partner we know had no technical knowledge and was entrusted with the financial side of the concern, so that on my father's shoulders rested the responsibility of design-

ing, making, and marketing the production of the small factory that was rushed up in a very short time to enable operations to commence with the minimum of delay.

So the potato patch mentioned before, came into a new use through the initiative and energy of a young man who loved independence above all things. Had any of our modern left wing intellectuals told this young man that by building a factory on a badly cultivated piece of land he was starting on the broad but evil way that leads to Capitalism, he would have been more than amused. I can imagine him replying that 'he was not doing anything so damned superior, but merely setting out to make a living,' for I am quite certain he would add: 'You get out of this world just what you manage to knock out of it, only fools think that the world owes them a living.' Since I have come to maturity I have read and heard a great deal about credit. Much that has seemed to me incomprehensible and therefore, I suppose, very complicated and clever. In the story of my father's start in business there seem to me incidents that indicate an aspect of this credit question difficult of definition. When anyone starts as a manufacturer there are a great number of tools to be bought, a factory to be built, machinery with all its etceteras, and a hundred and one things such as raw materials to work on, that are difficult to estimate exactly before a start is made.

My father's first small factory was built with all possible speed. It was an ugly little building, devoid of any form of decoration, standing on high ground at the end of a large straggling industrial village. During the time it was being built he spent his days on the scaffolding urging the men to get on with their work. His means were so slender that he could not afford to waste an hour on this unproductive business of building.

In the case of my father's venture his available capital was absorbed long before he was properly equipped. Amongst other things he found himself short of that some-

what necessary part of a factory, the engine for driving the plant. He set off to the neighbouring town to interview a firm of engineers where such important items were made. He explained his position to the senior partner of the firm, a Mr. G., who listened patiently to the story of a young man who needed an engine but had no money with which to buy it. Now Mr. G. was a kindly soul, he knew my grandfather, and my father slightly, as the very wild son who seemed about to settle down. "My boy," said Mr. G., patting him on the back, "you go home and I will look you out an engine, it may be second-hand mind you, that will do you well, and you can pay me whenever you are able."

The engine arrived in due course and was installed in the diminutive factory, where it remained doing all that Mr. G. had said it would do for a great number of years. The factory equipped with its engine and machinery made it possible for samples to be produced. These in being and my father transformed from a factory manager to a salesman, set off for London in search of his first market.

On a great number of occasions during his life, the boy who had found in his Kentucky employers kindly and generous hosts discovered also in the cold and calculating world of commerce, men who would renew his bills and give him extended credit, frequently in no way justified by his balance sheet, nay further, men who said: "No, I don't want to see your balance sheet, you can pay when you can, that will be all right."

He was very quick in making contact with all kinds of men and his extraordinary personality carried him through many a financial crisis. With the working people he was always at ease, and would talk on level terms with the men he employed, and those he met casually, never making any distinctions. Many of his employees were the sons of men who had worked for my grandfather, and my father seemed to know the family history of all who dwelt in the village in which his factory was situated. On occasions I would ask

his advice when engaging a new boy. He would ask his name, and then give a résumé of the boy's family history. "He should be all right," he would say, "that is if he's like his mother." "The father was a lazy devil but his mother was a so and so, very hard-working," or perhaps, "Oh, yes, I know his people, all had swelled heads but very competent. Keep the swelling down and he should be very useful."

He had a strong preference for local people whom he knew, and disliked employing strangers and, though very violent tempered, could never bring himself to dismiss anyone unless their conduct could be proved beyond doubt to have been consistently outrageous. His methods were unusual and disconcerting to conventional people.

On one of the rare occasions on which he had any trouble with his men, a section of them threatened to strike. His reply to the threat was: "All right, get on with it." On entering the shed in which the men worked, later in the day, he found them still there and still grumbling amongst each other. A 'grouser' always infuriated him, and the sight of a party with long faces arguing together raised his anger to boiling point. "I thought you fellows were going to strike," he roared at them, "and I told you to get on with it." Seizing their hats and coats that hung on the wall, he flung them through the door. "Now get on with your strike, and don't hang about here." He saw them all out of the shed and resumed the usual routine as if nothing had happened.

Next day they were all back and the storm was over, but then as one of our men said to me one day: "The gaffer's a rum un, aye 'e's a rum un," and he grinned as if he thoroughly relished the rumness of the gaffer.

I think he was quite conscious of the power he possessed of gaining his points, at least it seemed so, as he grew older, for he often said: "If I had sold pills in the market-place I should have been a millionaire."

His acute sense of humour and dislike of any form of

pomposity or humbug made him a difficult proposition for any salesman who departed from the path of sincerity in his approach. In the days when the factories were lighted with gas, there were a great number of agents for improved gas burners. My father had been pestered by these men for some time and had become very tired of them and their pushful methods, together with their often over-extravagant claims for their various types of burner.

Interviewing one of these travellers he allowed him to tell the story of his patent burner at great length, appearing to be extremely interested. Suddenly he said : " What was the exact percentage of gas you said your burner would save ? " " Ten per cent," replied the traveller. " That is too much," said my father, very solemnly. The traveller looked surprised : " Surely, sir, you can't save too much ? " " Oh, yes you can," said my father. " You see, it is like this, I have already fitted a number of new burners which have effected a saving of 95 per cent of the gas bill, which leaves only 5 per cent to be saved. If I use your burner we shall save 5 per cent too much and then the Gas Company will owe us something which may upset their arrangements and cause complication in our accounts." Though through force of circumstance his life was devoted to commerce he had a supreme contempt for what he called the commercial mind. He turned to me suddenly during one of the long tramps we used to have after the local foxhounds and said : " My boy, people call us ' damned tradesmen,' and just so long as our minds can only think in terms of extra discounts and sneaking profits I think the world is letting us down gently."

Money, as such, meant nothing to him, though naturally extravagant with a liking for the best in all things, he had not the slightest interest in his private financial affairs. Anything left over from the cost of the very simple needs of his family went back to his business, which was started merely as a means of gaining a livelihood, but which later

developed into an effort to express in concrete form his growing conviction that the only justification for work, beyond gaining a living was an effort to improve the quality of the things made and convert the public to appreciate quality in all they bought and used.

He hated everything shoddy and denounced it in extravagant language both in public and in private. In his everyday philosophy there was a strange mixture of cynicism and idealism. "If you want people to believe you, don't tell the truth," he would say. "Never write letters, fountain pens are responsible for half the world's trouble," was a favourite theme. "Big houses often have the least furniture in the attics." These and a hundred apt and frequently original expressions always coloured his conversation, and made it a joy to simple folk.

Once when explaining to him a scheme not too well thought out and consequently somewhat involved, he said: "Sounds rather like the way they weigh hogs in Kansas." "How do they do that?" I asked. "They put a plank over a fence, place the hog on one end and pieces of rock on the other. When there is enough rock to balance the hog they guess the weight of the rock."

After listening to the exploits of a newly engaged office boy who distinguished himself by starting at the bottom step when told to sweep the stairs, and who returned to the factory with a basketful of eggs, having been sent into the village for seven and sixpence in coppers, my father smiled and said: "Poor boy, he hasn't much candle in his lantern, but then, as an old man in the village used to say, it takes some of all sorts to make 'em all alike."

Most of his philosophy was handed to his hearers in the form of a story. I recall an occasion when irritable and impatient I complained of the lack of success attending some scheme I had in hand. He listened until I finished my tale of woe, and then he said: "Did you ever hear of the cowboy who wagered with his pal that he could break his leg

with a tallow candle?" "No." "Well," he continued, "he turned up his pal's trousers and started to tap his leg with the candle. This went on until lunch-time. After lunch he continued the gentle tapping until tea-time. They broke off for tea, after which the cowboy suggested that the evening should be spent in the same way. Irritated beyond endurance by the hours of tapping, the victim handed over the wager thankful to be relieved of the tedious nerve-racking experience of sitting still whilst the soft candle tapped the same spot in his leg. That's what you have to do in this world, my boy, keep on tapping."

"There is plenty of room at the top," he used to say. "If you want to get on in the world you must come in from the top. Climbing is too slow a process for one lifetime, besides those on the rung above you jump on your fingers." He disliked telephones and busybodies. He never could be induced to use a telephone and of busybodies he would say: "Oh, he is far too busy to have time to earn his living." As a boy I had heard my father describe people as "As poor as Job's turkey," and asked him once "Why Job's turkey?" "Because it took nine of them to make a shadow," he replied, "which is queer," he went on, smiling at me, "queer as Dick's Hatband, which went round nine times and wouldn't tie."

He delighted in the stories of the local worthies, and many times I have heard him tell of the sweep who entered the local pub in which some of the more important tradesmen were sitting round the fire. The sweep being of a modest nature and very conscious of his sooty clothes sat himself down at the back of the room. After a time, one of the more important and hearty members of the company turned to the sweep and said: "Well Jim, how are things looking in hell this morning?" "Oh, pretty much the same as they are here," replied the sweep. "Those who have the most money sit nearest the fire."

Talking once to the buyer of a drapery business famous

for price-cutting, he was becoming restive owing to the religious fervour of the buyer who was emphasizing the importance of salvation. My father felt that this religious talk, following so closely on an effort to buy at an unfair price, smacked of humbug. Listening with ill-concealed impatience, he at last burst out with : " My dear man, you will never save your soul unless it can be done at one and elevenpence three farthings."

I believe that for many men the middle years of their lives are difficult and critical. It is then that they begin to look back on the road they have travelled, to estimate the hours lost on the journey and speculate on their future. At such a time, when hard experience has dimmed the rich colours of youthful dreams, men take stock of the desires that appeared so important in the days when so much seemed possible, when there appeared to be so little to resist their energy and enthusiasm.

Youth goes into battle scorning armour, strong in the consciousness of abundant vitality. Reasonable and clean youth jumps into the fight anticipating an invigorating tussle with reasonable and clean foes. Youth knows nothing or little, of the stupidity that makes men resist for the sake of resisting, of jealousy that working unseen in such unexpected and unlikely quarters, renders the motives of men so inscrutable and their actions so bewilderingly unreasonable. Middle-age does not vault into the saddle after taking a toss, with the easy spring of youth. Between forty and fifty years of age, a man becomes conscious of the tender spots, of old wounds that may give trouble if unduly exposed. He feels the necessity of some form of armour and begins to take steps to conserve that reservoir of energy that does not fill up so quickly as in the days gone by.

My father was possessed of amazing vitality and unbounded enthusiasm, but his life was a struggle. Building up a business when the start is from scratch, when money is needed in ever-increasing amounts for its development, and

for a growing family, produces a crop of worries likely to sober the most optimistic nature. In my father's case these anxieties were made more difficult to bear by a nature that hated restraint of any kind, and longed for the freedom of movement and action that only an assured and adequate income can give.

At times of great stress he would take refuge in a day's tramp after the hounds. On these occasions we would walk miles in silence, staying out until the light was failing, when we would turn into a village public house, stretch our tired legs in front of a fire, whilst we waited for a dish of tea and a plentiful supply of ham and eggs. Refreshed with food and rest we would set off in the dark for home, with sometimes a good ten miles to do on top of a long day's walking. On looking back I see that my father always sought rest and inspiration out of doors.

In earlier days breaking in horses for friends, in middle life long days after the hounds, and later, when things were becoming easier he amused himself by taking a small acreage and grazing a few bullocks. Last phase of all, a voyage round the world and then his beloved garden. "Not a Tottenham Court Road affair," he would say to his visitors. It was a garden of unexpected vistas. A rose garden here seen through an arch built of old granite. A blaze of spring flowers, daffs, primroses, periwinkles, and aconite, under forest trees. Sunlight gleaming through the bushes on the wonderful blue of anchusia.

This garden was laid out by my grandfather, and to its improvement my father devoted his last days. In its mellow beauty he found some happiness and he would take his workpeople to see it, in little intimate parties always followed faithfully by his gardener, who was his friend and servant until the end.

He rarely quoted poetry, but in the verse he did at times repeat was expressed the desire he had for the open air when burdened with trouble :

“ If thou art worn and hard beset
with sorrows that thou wouldst forget,
If thou wouldst read a lesson, that will keep
thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep,
Go to the woods and hills—No tears
Dim the sweet look that Nature wears.”

I suppose most men who live entirely by their own efforts at times face the problem of what they should do if their plans failed. I don't think that my father ever lost sight of the possibility of at least comparative failure. I heard him say so many times that he did not care what happened so long as he might be left with a kitchen with a wooden floor and a good fire. The wooden floor seemed to be an essential feature of this imaginary refuge. Over and over again he would repeat his gardener's story, of his (the gardener's) father, who addressed his family in reassuring terms: “ Look at them hams, ain't they picters, and there's a side o' bacon on the wall, you can't get up the stairs for taters. We've got the drop on the winter when the snow goes blithering by the windows.” This homely vision of a poor man who had provided for himself and family against the winter months seemed to comfort him when assailed by doubts of his ability to win through. Where some men found a sense of security in the existence of well-to-do relatives, or in the knowledge that they had tied a substantial sum of money on their wives, my father would be sustained by the knowledge that his real needs were few and simple, and that it would be a very unlucky disaster that would render them impossible of gratification.

He had little time or energy left over from his absorbing business to devote to public life, though his interest in social and political problems was always intense. He occasionally took the chair at a political meeting and at times would speak in public, but in these activities he was handicapped by lack of training and that essential discipline that can only be gained by considerable practice. As a speaker he was intensely original and convincing, but his

fertile mind jumped with such rapidity from one subject to another that only those of his audience accustomed to his particular technique could follow him.

In the chair his original and devastatingly frank method of dealing with hecklers, though the delight of the meeting, struck terror to the heart of the candidate who, unused to such methods, visualized himself at the bottom of the poll as a result of them.

Men who have built businesses by their own effort are frequently accused of being narrow minded and indifferent to public responsibilities. This is often true, but it is only fair to them to realize that the strain and concentration necessary in the early stages of such an effort makes great calls on the vitality and is unfortunately liable to create habits that cannot be shaken off in later years. The man who works for another, or is occupied in a post under some institution, has generally fixed hours of labour and limited responsibility. Such a situation makes it easier to free the mind of thoughts of the normal duties that the task entails, thus leaving it free to occupy itself with other interests.

Those who set out to make their own way in the world, shoulder the entire responsibility and no trade union limits their hours of labour. Moreover, there is always an uncertainty that is unknown to those who work for a fixed wage. The head of a one-man business shares with the piece-worker that worrying uncertainty with regard to his wages, a factor generally accepted by serious people as one of the greatest hardships that the working people have to put up with, but a consideration rarely, if ever, recognized with reference to the employer.

At no time in his life did my father know the pleasure of real financial security. At the time in his career when his business was sufficiently established to justify a feeling of ease and security, the whole commercial world was shaken by the great slump that followed the War. At that time men of business saw their reserves, accumulated through years of

careful finance and personal sacrifice, melt to nothing in a few months. Many firms regarded by the trades in which they operated as solid and safe as the oft-quoted Bank of England, found themselves without resources other than the personal credit of their directors. Entire industries were as insecure as a house of cards, needing the merest touch to ensure total collapse. No man of business who passed through those days will ever forget the strain and worry they entailed. The atmosphere was electric with apprehension. The post brought nothing but the cancellation of orders, whilst every telephone call was a shock to the nerves. On the one hand, sales dwindling after the manner of a fairy tale, on the other huge contracts for raw materials at fabulously high prices, to be taken in, with the knowledge that for every twenty shillings' worth taken and paid for, at least ten shillings must be lost. Huge losses already made and still greater losses inevitable in the future that all were struggling to postpone.

It was to this alarming state of things that my father returned after his second and last visit to America. After the strain of the War years which he felt deeply, he decided to make a voyage round the world. Before setting off for this holiday I recall him saying: "I have put so many things I wanted badly on one side, I do feel I might have this trip which I should like so much."

He was so unselfish that he always seemed to experience a feeling of guilt if he spent money on his own pleasure, and we had to put a good deal of pressure on him to persuade him to take the trip.

It was my unpleasant task to meet him at the station and to break the news of the critical state of things that had come about in his absence. It took him some time to grasp the situation, but as soon as he realized it, he set to work to use his best efforts to do what he could to pull things round. At this time he was about seventy years of age, and a tired man, though he would never admit that such was the case.

His visit to America was not a success, for he was bitterly disappointed in all that he saw. Fifty years ago he had left the States with high hopes for that great land of experiment. He had painted pictures in his mind of a country of settlers developing a land flowing with milk and honey.

He had seen and talked of his visions of a land becoming ripe and prosperous through the work of men who had settled in a wilderness, to cultivate it with hard work in order that it might flourish like the agricultural lands of Europe. He found, however, a highly industrialized country where the land seemed to have been exploited and left, and all that he saw depressed him. Whatever his visions were, his second visit to 'God's own Country' was obviously a bitter disappointment, for after his first visit he would talk for hours on the great future of the United States of America, whilst after his second, fifty years later, he seemed unable to find anything good to say about the land that had made such a deep impression on him in his youth.

The grinding worry of the slump years following on the strain of the War did their work, obliterating any good derived from the voyage round the world. To the last, my father claimed to be the youngest man within his business, a claim so true in so far as it referred to his indomitable spirit, but sadly untrue with regard to his physical condition.

He saw his business through the darkest months of the great slump, and then took to his bed and soon passed away, leaving many sad hearts behind him, especially those who had worked for him. "'E were a good gaffer, 'e were," said one of his oldest employees, who had helped to carry him to his last resting-place. "Do you think you boys will be able to carry on?" he asked me pathetically, with tears in his old eyes. We just looked at one another, then he repeated: "'E were a good gaffer," and walked slowly to his job.

In the brave new world where efficiency counts before all things, where there are managers, sub-managers, and deputy

sub-managers, where men clock in and are numbered, and the Bosses sit on Olympus issuing orders in short sharp tones to underlings through telephones, where coloured electric lights flicker their message through huge works, calling number so and so to the head office, men may or may not be happier, who knows ?

When the men returned to the factory after carrying their gaffer to his place of rest, it was as a family to the empty house of mourning that they came. We just looked at one another and we could not speak about it. We knew that it would never be quite the same. We might grow, we might expand to proportions undreamt of by the older generation of workers, we might dwindle and finally fail, but things could never be like old times, and traditions would eventually take the place of that living team of men who had seen the beginnings, and anxiously watched and rejoiced in the success.

How many who sit in the shade of a great tree give a thought to the hand that put the sapling into the ground and watched it grow so slowly, so laboriously. It is so easy to accept the work of others and theorize about it, but only those who were present at the start of things know how personal, how individual, all work really is. In the beginning there was a potato patch and a young man who yearned for independence, in the middle there was a business known in many parts of the world, employing many men, and keeping many families. What of the future ?

CHAPTER II

I ENTER BUSINESS

I DID not enter business in the romantic manner so often described in the memoirs of industrial magnates, starting as an errand-boy at five shillings a week, supporting an aged mother by supplementing a meagre salary with extra work that entailed labouring until the dawn. Nor did I rise from such a humble position to be the managing director of a gigantic concern, operating in every corner of the earth.

Not having commenced in the conventional gutter, nor having risen to great heights in the commercial world, there is no need to strain my imagination to invent a story that would form a good subject for a popular film, nor state a formula to account for phenomenal success. Such stories have always intrigued me, though they have suggested in their similarity the existence of a convention that all successful business men seem to regard as inviolable.

These men appear always to have been animated by the same fixity of purpose, to have had before them a clear and definite goal. A purpose, thought out in extreme youth, and adhered to with amazing tenacity throughout a long and difficult life. It may be so, indeed I hope it is.

We all love our fairy stories, and many a younger son has been supported through life's struggles by the recollection of the success that Messrs. Grimm and Anderson so often allot to the last born. After all, there are a great number of men engaged in commerce who operate on a

modest scale, but who are none the less important in the aggregate.

I believe that the proportion of business concerns in this country employing a hundred or less people is very large, larger than generally realized.

These men keep the wheels of industry turning; the Dick Whittingtons who turned, but did not become Lord Mayor of London, but carried on in a comparatively small way, finding employment for a hundred or so men and women. These smaller people do not write their memoirs but pay the country's taxes and frequently contribute a great deal in initiative, in invention and in new ideas that are often exploited by bigger men. They form the background of industry, the training ground for future industrialists providing the practical ideas on which the men of theory build up their attractive castles in the air. It was in such company that I made my first acquaintance with commerce.

My father decided that it would be to the advantage of his business if one of his sons were to be trained as a chartered accountant before entering it. I was chosen for this training, not because I had shown any sign of being particularly fitted for the profession, but rather, I fancy, because being the youngest my father was not ready for me in the business, in which two of my brothers were already engaged.

I was therefore duly articled to a firm of chartered accountants with a varied connection. The fact that the firm I was attached to was not too large and that the audits they conducted covered a very wide field of commercial and professional activities, was of great advantage. I was given the chance to obtain an insight into a great variety of businesses.

It was soon obvious to me that accountancy was not my line of country. Though I made considerable efforts for a year or so to interest myself in finance, carefully reading the

Accountant and delving into the financial columns of the newspapers, my interest remained artificial, and my understanding of such matters was superficial. To this day I regard the accountant with a mixture of pity and awe.

Passing my intermediate more by luck than learning, I approached my final examination in a spirit of hope quite unjustified by the amount of work I had done. This fence was cleared at the fourth attempt, by which time I was convinced beyond a peradventure that the 'City' was not my spiritual home, and that High Finance was a study intended for others.

The training of the chartered accountant is, however, an excellent one for those who are contemplating taking up a commercial career. During the years spent as an articled pupil I learnt a great deal that has been of value in business life. The accuracy insisted on in the accountants' profession is valuable discipline especially to those who are naturally deficient in this virtue.

One acquires the habit of making an orderly statement, a record in figures of any work that one is called upon to tackle. Thus when circumstances lead one to work out a system for the better conduct of business affairs, the accountant's training is of assistance. It becomes natural after such a training to reduce suggestions for re-organizations into terms of figures, planned on paper in a manner most likely to be easily understood by simple people.

Moreover, as accountants speak the same professional language, the more men so trained that find their way into a business, the easier it becomes to introduce new and better systems with a minimum of trouble and friction. The accountant is, however, a specialist, and is apt like all specialists to take a somewhat narrow view of business problems. It was in an accountant's office that I learnt the importance of accuracy, of system, and efficient organization. It was later in business that I discovered that these

things, good in themselves, useful and important, form only part of the story of successful business.

The accountant is an essential partner, but he is a bad dictator. He possesses the formula for accuracy, order and system, but his training will have to be considerably widened before he can work alone in the average business which must deal with so many human problems that obstinately refuse to be rationalized or accounted for.

The day to day work in the accountants' office was monotonous and uninspiring. The compensations were to be found in the variety of the firms visited. I went behind the scenes in such diverse concerns as hosiery and boot factories, stone quarries, schools, retail shops, wine and spirit merchants, basket works, corset factories, mineral-water factories, breweries, machine-builders, engineers, and assisted in the audit of the Territorial Army accounts, and those of the municipal departments.

Here was matter for real interest, which has served me well in later years. I discovered that contrary to a very prevalent idea, all manufacturers are not making fortunes, and that a great deal of work, worry and responsibility exists for amazingly small profit.

This information has proved a useful corrective to that idea so common with men of business, that the other fellow is making all the money, that other trades are easier and freer from worry than the one they happen to be engaged in. I discovered that tradition rules in trade as in other walks of life, and that a very great number of people are employed through the dictates of custom, rather than economics.

Wandering around these various works I was impressed by the kindness of many employers and the meanness of others. I found an almost universal objection to change, a suspicion of new methods. In some concerns we were welcomed as useful assistants, in others we were regarded as a species of detective with evil intentions towards the staff.

The accountant's clerk has to exercise a great deal of tact as his standing depends entirely on the attitude towards the profession adopted by the heads of the firms he works in. Should it happen that the accountant is employed by a firm through pressure on the part of the bank manager, then things will not be made too easy for him, and he will require patience and skill to extract the information necessary to insure a proper audit and correct balance sheet.

Things in this respect have doubtless altered since my youth, the accountant being more generally accepted as an essential part of business life than was the case thirty years ago.

Many successful business men had a very slight knowledge of the science of accounts and I remember an occasion when one of our senior clerks had great difficulty in explaining to the head of a very large and prosperous firm the reason for the appearance of the item profit on the liability side of his balance sheet. "Surely," our client argued, "a profit is an asset, and should therefore be included amongst the assets." With discreet secrecy I sympathized with him in his view. It seems logical to so argue and perverse to persist in the correct view of the problem.

Strange human problems present themselves to the accountant at times, problems that cannot be solved within the limits of his cold and mathematical training. I remember the head of a business who had been obliged to dismiss two or more secretaries in succession, remarking on the fact that each of them was in the habit of using scent. We were asked to advance a theory that connected the use of perfume with an inability to distinguish between the money of an employer and of the employee. We were unable to solve the riddle, but from thence onwards we paid particular attention to the petty cash account of any clerk who used eau-de-Cologne on his handkerchief.

Having passed my final examination and completed my term of years as an articled pupil, I found myself without any

definite plans. My father's business was still in a state of uncertain development that made it difficult for him to place me in any definite position in it. I spent some months doubling after the hounds, playing golf and renewing my acquaintance with the pleasures of a life of leisure. My father suggested that it would be desirable for me to obtain some further experience in the accountancy world, and I proceeded to peruse the advertisement columns of those papers most likely to help me in this direction. I was not feeling too well at that time and in my search for a suitable post I confess that I was far more alarmed at the prospect of success than I was at the chance of failing to find anyone anxious to employ me.

I set off for London with a sinking heart and a complete absence of any ambition to emulate the example of the young men one reads about who embark on such expeditions with the resolution and enthusiasm that is conventionally supposed to insure a brilliant future. With an unconscious skill, that would have been a just cause for pride on the part of an experienced salesman, I managed to interview partners in two of London's leading firms of chartered accountants. One of these distinguished gentlemen permitted me to add my name to a very long list of waiting aspirants for a post in his business, holding out very little hope for my future. The other quite unconsciously demonstrated in a most delightful manner the difference in the facial expression that one man may wear when he is under the impression that he is interviewing a prospective client, only to find out later in the interview that he is really talking to a young man seeking work. I was truly astonished that a man occupying such a high position in so distinguished a profession should have so little control of his features. As the dreadful truth dawned upon him that I was not a wealthy business magnate asking him to take over my audit, but a newly qualified chartered accountant seeking a job, the ingratiating smile dis-

appeared, to be replaced by a bored expression guaranteed to penetrate the thickest skin. I was dismissed with the minimum of ceremony and found myself in the street again, greatly relieved that I had not been engaged.

My third attempt to find work proved a serious shock. I was accorded an interview by two pleasant young men who had obviously only recently commenced in business for themselves. We all seemed to get on very well together, and I felt my heart sinking as I realized that I really had a very good chance of being engaged. These polite partners asked me several searching questions about my past experience, and I only escaped a post with them by frankly confessing that I knew nothing about the accounts of multiple stores, which I gathered formed an important part of their connection.

We parted on good terms with, I thought at the time, a little regret on both sides. They were just commencing business on their own account, and as they explained, really required someone with greater experience than their own.

My efforts to find a post slackened somewhat after this trip to town. It was not until some months later that I made contact with an accountant operating in Penang, who was in search of a qualified junior. I spent some time in the library looking up particulars of the position and climate of Penang and arranged to meet the advertiser in London. Intuitively I felt that I should get this post.

Before keeping my appointment I discussed the possibility of the post with my father. As it was necessary to sign an agreement for several years' service should I be successful in getting the Penang job, my father suddenly lost interest in my efforts to gain a wider experience and suggested that I should join his business forthwith. I cancelled my appointment with the Penang advertiser, explaining the circumstances of my changed plans, and thus terminated my very half-hearted efforts to persuade anyone that I should be an asset to their business.

My father, as will be realized from the previous chapter, being a man of extremely original ideas, the training and experience I derived from my association with him cannot be considered in any way typical of that received by the average young man on entering business.

The industry in which he was engaged was very old, and at the time he started there were already established many tried and wealthy businesses. He had not, therefore, the advantage of making and marketing a new invention, but had to carve out for himself a place against the competition of firms who had been operating for generations, and who were as financially sound as a well-established bank. His only hope lay in initiating a new form of attack, and he was not slow in doing so.

The traditions of his trade meant little to him, whilst his great mental energy soon asserted itself in the form of new methods pushed boldly forward with the result that in half a lifetime his business was known in many parts of the world.

At the time I joined the business, nothing would induce my father to put pen to paper, and at no time during his life could he be persuaded to use the telephone. Gifted with truly amazing intuition he seemed able to see twenty years ahead. Many of his prognostications which seemed so absurd or unlikely at the time he made them, have become the accepted factors of business to-day.

Having had to reorganize the business almost entirely through the loss of trade with South America, due to the high tariffs raised in that country against the goods we made, my father became interested in the tariff question. He often said that unless we took steps to fight the rising tariffs of the countries to which we were exporting, we should find ourselves left with only the remnants of a home market in which to operate. Seeing the danger of total exclusion from foreign markets, he commenced to study the improvement of the quality of the goods he made. He argued that

by so doing we might still be able to jump the tariff walls that were rising steadily against us.

It will be realized that I entered a business with a comparatively short history of experiment and struggle behind it, and an uncertain future in view of the great change in business conditions that was beginning to set in at the time. The business itself was in a transition stage. It had parted finally with the old method of manufacturing exclusively for the great merchant houses and had embarked on the then untried method, for manufacturers of our kind of goods, of dealing direct with the retail. This change of method raised entirely new problems directing attention to that of selling in detail.

We had become manufacturers and merchants, with little or no knowledge of the latter's difficulties. It was necessary to hammer out our own technique and it was in this direction that my energies were soon exclusively engaged. On entering the business I discovered that there was no vacant position awaiting me. I was turned loose in the factory and warehouse to make some position for myself. Quite naturally I was not very welcome to those already entrenched. My father in his habitually vague way when faced with settling a matter that might involve him in the task of wrestling with detail, assured me that there was plenty to do for anyone who had sense enough to do it, and left me to work out the problem of making a position for myself. Thus I was able to intrude myself into everybody's department, learning all I could and suggesting any improvements that might occur to me. My training as an accountant gave me some authority and had also taught me how to employ tact when dealing with the inevitable resistance that is put up against the innovator.

This undefined position gave me an excellent opportunity to gain an insight into the working of the various departments. It was obvious that there was room for a great deal of organizing, many methods employed being out of date

or entirely lacking in system. Having spent a good deal of time in the various departments of the business, making any suggestions that occurred to me for their improvement and at the same time picking up useful and essential information, I finally settled down to assist in building up an advertising department.

The idea of this department was to improve and modernize our methods of distribution. In our trade, modern advertising was more or less unknown and the methods commonly employed to-day were not then used. It was therefore a simple matter to appear original and progressive and we quickly attracted attention to our business, an attention that suggested a far greater measure of progress than was justified by actual facts. We did things that were 'not done,' employed methods common enough in some other trades, but quite new to our own.

Some of our competitors merely scoffed whilst others proceeded to copy our methods, and I found considerable interest and pleasure in watching the effect of these new methods, in a trade old in tradition, haughty in the security of a long assured position. It was during these years that I discovered how great is the gap between theory and practice.

British manufacturers have frequently been criticized for their lack of selling ability. It is often said of them that their methods of distribution are crude and elementary, and that they would do well to copy their American competitors in the art of sales promotion. There is, of course, a great deal of truth in these criticisms, though in this respect things have improved very rapidly during the last twenty years. In fairness to our manufacturers it should be remembered that many standard trades of this country have been established for a great number of years. Anyone therefore entering into the world of commerce finds himself surrounded by traditions, very old and deeply ingrained in those responsible for its conduct.

In the trade that I entered it had been the custom for years

for manufacturers to sell their entire production to the large wholesale merchants, generally situated in the City of London. These merchants would place large orders generally about twice a year, and these orders though few in number would be of sufficient size to keep the factory employed throughout the year. Thus the actual selling involved would constitute quite an insignificant item in the affairs of the manufacturing firms concerned. It would probably be necessary for one director or partner to visit these merchant houses at fairly regular intervals, two of these visits only being of real importance ; that is when the spring and autumn seasons orders were to be obtained. The other visits were in the nature of courtesy calls, or made with the object of displaying newer kinds of goods likely to be of interest to the merchants doing business regularly in standard lines.

Business on this system was conducted in a friendly and somewhat leisurely manner, and there was no apparent reason to spend large sums on advertising, or to employ an army of high-pressure salesmen to obtain it. It was quite natural that men trained for years in this school of commerce, should regard the new methods slowly coming into practice which involved sales managers, expensive advertising campaigns, and a team of trained travellers, as both unnecessary and a waste of good money. Moreover, such methods, largely imported from the U.S.A., appeared to manufacturers of the old school as vulgar, undignified, and altogether undesirable.

When any business has been in existence for generations there naturally grows up with it an etiquette, a standard of conduct quite as rigid as that which one associates with the Army, Navy, and other professions. A system of commerce old enough to produce the City Guilds was obviously bound up in traditions difficult to vary, and impossible to be brushed aside.

Anyone who has attended the old-fashioned dinners of the

commercial travellers, common years ago in every commercial hotel in the country, will realize the part played by ceremony in the lives of these men responsible for conducting the sales between the merchant houses and the retail shops. At these dinners the senior traveller presided, the juniors referred to him as Mr. President, asking his permission to join the company on entering the dining-room. "May I join you, Mr. President?" "Certainly sir, be seated," these were the phrases familiar to every traveller who has 'been on the road' for thirty years or so.

In a country such as this where tradition rules all classes, new methods that ride rough-shod over old habits are not taken to easily nor kindly.

Thus the new country has an advantage. There are no outworn customs to be discarded, no ancient traditions to be taken into account. Commerce in a new country starts with a clean slate, free from the handicap of vested interests with roots penetrating deep in the past.

On the other hand the older countries are fortunate in the possession of commercial skill and experience that can only be accumulated through the passage of years. An aptitude for certain kinds of work that is handed down from generation to generation, is something that every practical manufacturer knows to be very real, though so difficult of exact definition.

In bad times the problem of keeping his skilled hands together is one that has worried to the point of distraction many a manufacturer. He knows that it is easier to replace lost money than lost skill. For this reason he will work his factory at a loss rather than run the risk of losing them. When once the skill is dispensed with it is impossible to take advantage of a boom in trade, for then, though orders are easy to get, the necessary hands are no longer there to do the work.

Building up this new advertising department was

extremely interesting. There were no hampering traditions, and it was an easy matter to experiment in any direction without fear of raising serious opposition in the factory. We spent many days card-indexing customers, analysing the sales of the various articles made and working out schemes for co-operative advertising between our customers and ourselves.

We examined every kind of office appliance and labour-saving device offered to us by enthusiastic salesmen anxious to prove their ability to reduce our work and worry to an infinitesimal item.

In common with so many business men we sought diligently for a formula that would ensure ever-increasing sales. Dividing and re-dividing the country into sections which were allocated to members of our sales staff, we held meetings at which various plans of campaign were discussed and decided upon, to be put into operation in the prearranged territories. We operated with what is called the law of averages, discovering like so many others that it is not a law.

We endeavoured to reduce the factor of probability to a law, and found it irreducible. On occasions when our efforts met with success, we thought we had found the way of commercial salvation, only to discover at a later date that we could not stage an encore.

In those interesting and happy years of enthusiastic efforts I jumped through the hoops that so many had passed through previously, and which doubtless so many will jump through in the future. Progress was slow but the work was interesting and at times amusing.

Building up a business is after all a sort of battle in which there is room for all the energy, enterprise, and initiative a man may possess. New problems arise daily for which no solution can be found in text-books : it is therefore necessary to keep planning and re-planning in order to keep abreast with the times.

"Nothing in life stands still," my father used to say.

"If you are not going forward you are slipping back." When a man becomes too tired to think in the business world he may rest assured that there are many among his competitors who are still fresh, still thinking hard.

A year or so before the Great War our new Advertising Department was established and accepted as a necessary part of the business. Its activities had outgrown its name, and its influence had spread round the factory as it became apparent that successful advertising required close co-operation with the making side of the concern, together with that of the outside representatives of the business.

About this time I was sent to Paris to try to collect a sum of money from a defaulting agent. Later, I again set out for France with a new agent, remaining there about six months, helping him to get established in the French market. It was during this effort to increase our business with France that I came up against the difficulties of doing business in a highly protected market. What we lacked in business results, we certainly balanced in experience gained as we wearily tramped the city in search of customers who could be persuaded to buy goods, made extremely expensive by the high duties paid on them.

Leaving our new agent to carry on, I returned to England for fresh inspiration and to renew my enthusiasm for this very depressing work. It was my intention to return in order to continue my fascinating though difficult task of doing business on the Continent.

My plans, however, were upset by the outbreak of the War, which created at once an entirely new set of difficulties for which we had no experience to help us. The newspapers emphasized the importance of 'Business as usual,' but our customers, unmoved by this advice, sat down and cancelled their orders. As this happened at the beginning of our busy season, when we were deeply committed with large stocks, it appeared that business was going to be very unusual, if indeed it were going to exist at all.

CHAPTER III

I BECOME A SOLDIER

AS the fact that we were really at war registered itself in my brain, I found that I was fast losing interest in the business, usual or otherwise, and I turned my attention to finding a place in the Army.

If it had been difficult to sell goods in Paris, handicapped by a very slight knowledge of the language and high tariff walls, I found it equally difficult to join the Army in time of war. In response to advertisements for young men to train as officers, I presented myself at the local Regimental Depot as a suitable candidate. After waiting several hours, I was informed by the officer in charge that I was too old. I then made my way to the headquarters of the Territorials, where I was informed by a very superior young man that they needed neither officers nor men. I tried to enlist myself as a despatch rider, but again with the same lack of success.

Thus I found myself in the position of the down and out and very dirty tramp, who when trying to enlist was turned down roughly and rudely by the medical officer. The tramp drew himself up, nude and dirty after his examination, and looking the M.O. in the eye, said : " Very well sir, lose your bloody war."

Discouraged and irritated by my inability to persuade the Army authorities that my country needed me, I returned to the factory and tried to interest myself in commerce under war conditions. A few days passed in a rapidly increasing state of restlessness, and I again found myself on the way to

the local Regimental Depot, this time at the head of a party of men from the factory who had decided to 'join up' as a result of a meeting of single men, which we called in the works to aid recruiting.

Half of our party were turned down on medical grounds, and though it was obvious that the medical officer was not impressed by my chest measurements, and the state of my left eye, I was passed into His Majesty's forces through the influence of a significant nod by a friendly major, directed at the medical officer.

Two days hanging about and the party, arrayed in the last uniforms possessed by the Depot, entrained for Aldershot where we said *au revoir* to commerce, and set about developing new personalities of a military character.

We departed for Aldershot one September morning feeling depressed, and not a little apprehensive. We left our home station amidst the cheers of friends and relations who gathered on the platform to see us off. I fancy there were few people in the factory that morning, most of the staff having found their way to the station where they were joined by curious villagers who had turned up to see what the excitement was about.

In all these enthusiastic and noisy departures of the War period, there was an undercurrent of sadness which remained uppermost in the minds of those taking part, after the cheering had died away. Whilst the onlookers were waving flags and shouting as they jostled each other on the crowded platform, anxious mothers tugged at my sleeve and whispered in unhappy accents: "Look after my boy, Sir." "Take care of my lad, Mister." It was all very harrowing really, and I think there were few intimately concerned in the send-off who were not thankful when it was over. As the train moved out of earshot of the cheering crowd, our little party settled down into a thoughtful silence. We were leaving the familiar faces and scenes for something we could only guess at, and some of our silent speculations

were not too cheerful. The friendly major who had helped me to circumvent the medical officer had pinned a single stripe on my arm as a parting gift. I left my home with the rank of unpaid—and I might add, inefficient—lance-corporal. I was to regret that honour bitterly before many weeks were passed. Had any of us had the least idea of what was in store for us I doubt if that party would have reached Aldershot at full strength.

We trudged up from the station at Aldershot with our kit-bags on our shoulders and our hearts in our boots; arriving at last in a gloomy barrack-square where we dropped our bags on the ground and took up what we imagined was a military formation to await further orders. We did not have to wait long, for almost immediately there arrived on the scene a very active and voluble company sergeant-major who lost no time in dispelling any ideas that we might have as to our importance in life. His eyes ran quickly down the ranks stopping suddenly as if arrested by some unnatural horror. I became extremely uncomfortable as I realized that his eyes were fixed on the stripe I proudly bore upon my arm. He addressed a little homily on the duties of a soldier to the party as a whole, his eye still on my stripe. Then, as if suddenly inspired by this simple decoration, he went on to say, "and as for that elongated blighter on the flank, he must understand that we shall soon have that bloody stripe off his arm. We want no fancy bloody lance-corporal here and don't you forget it, my lad." I did not forget it; I was not for one moment permitted to forget it. I tried hard to do so and would have gladly, at any time, given it to anyone fool enough to accept it, but such fools were rare, so I kept it and cursed it.

We were marched away and given a 'biscuit' each. A biscuit was a portion of a mattress and these biscuits made up a bed of sorts. There were not enough to go round so that we had to be content with one-third of a mattress each, which we placed on the floor and tried to sleep on. Alder-

shot was hopelessly overcrowded, there being two battalions at full strength in each of the block of buildings built for one. On the door of the room in which I slept was painted the words twenty-five men ; in it there lived fifty-seven, all lying pell-mell on their hard, dirty 'biscuits.' There were no uniforms, no rifles, no baths, no blankets, no beds, and very little food. Practically all the men were new to soldiering, which, of course, threw an enormous amount of work on the few officers and N.C.O.s left to struggle with a mass of very rough humanity quite ignorant of any form of discipline and quite indifferent about acquiring it. The Commanding Officers told us that we must be prepared to work extremely hard as we were to be ready for France in three months' time. "You will be expected to do in three months what the soldier in peace-time does in three years," he said.

And we did it, but not without tears and sweat. The absence of officers and N.C.O.s made it necessary for all who bore any rank, no matter how humble, to move up two or three steps for the purpose of duties. Though only a corporal I was soon doing duty as platoon-sergeant and sometimes platoon-commander with extra training after the day's work was done for all N.C.O.s. My hours were roughly from 5.30 a.m. until lights-out. The battalion would return from a long, heavy day's field training, and as soon as it was dismissed the bugle would blow for orderly sergeants (at the double). We would pick up our notebooks and run for the square, where an irate sergeant-major awaited us with a mass of detail that made rest impossible even for ten minutes. The food, which was indifferent, was served on tables on the balcony that ran outside the barrack rooms. As one hacked away at a joint of meat a crowd of men would gather round, each with a hunk of bread in their outstretched hand, shouting : "Stick a bit o' meat on this bread, corporal." Amid such chaotic arrangements it was impossible either to ensure every man

getting his share or to provide for oneself. In desperation we used to lock the men in their room whilst we cut up the food and laid it out on the plates. When this was done we opened the door and let the men out, who rushed to the tables like a pack of hounds at a kill.

I found it impossible to get accustomed to this way of feeding and my numerous and unfamiliar duties so worried me that I was quite unable to face food served and eaten under conditions that seemed to me far worse and more revolting than bread and cheese eaten out in a field where at least there was silence and cleanliness. I recall one morning when standing bewildered and miserable with trying to bellow some order into the frantic crowd, when I felt someone tugging at my sleeve. I turned to find a corporal whom I knew as a nice-looking little fellow, who was a regular. He beckoned me to follow him, which I did, and we passed into a small room which was petitioned off from the main barrack. He pointed to a plate on which was a nicely cooked steak, carefully served on a clean plate, with a piece of bread at the side. "What's this?" I said, wondering if he had brought me along to show off his ability as a cook. "It's for you, mate," he replied. "I've watched you out there a good many times trying to deal with these bloody roughs and you don't get much, so I thought I'd do a bit for you." "Go on," he said, when he saw that I was hesitating. "Get outside it," and he disappeared before I had time to say anything.

The problem of feeding became more acute as I got accustomed to the new life, and I set about searching for some means of getting a decent meal in comfort. In the few moments I had to myself I scouted round the district in search of an eating-house of some kind. I at last found a hut not too far away, run by some churchpeople, where one could get such simple fare as sausages and mash, and to this club I repaired until it became too well known and so overcrowded that it was useless. I had no time in which to wait

for anything, and for this reason the public baths were useless to me.

As the troops poured into Aldershot and district the queues outside the pubs, cafés, baths, etc., increased in length, which put them entirely out of action for a busy N.C.O. I was desperate for a bath and a decently served meal. One evening I entered the one nice-looking restaurant in the town, only to be told that they could not serve men there as the place was reserved entirely for officers. I was too desperate, however, to be easily put off. I ran the head waiter to ground and explained my position to him. Giving him half a sovereign I asked him to hide me in a corner and see that I had a good meal whenever I called. He was very good about it and fixed me up where I was unseen in the room, and there I went as often as I could get away during the remainder of my stay at Aldershot. I was learning the art of getting the best that was possible out of very unpromising circumstances.

The food problem solved, I turned my attentions to my bruised and painfully sore body. My shoulders were so tender with the rifle exercises that I had to send home for some pads to fit under my tunic to take the bump of the rifle off my very thin bones.

In a moment of enthusiasm I had volunteered for a special course of bayonet fighting. I was told afterwards that a wise soldier never volunteers for anything, and I wished, before the course was over, that I had heard the saying earlier. We had no proper fighting kit, and an instructor who took a delight in displaying his prowess with a spring bayonet at the expense of his pupils. He referred to us kindly as a 'pack of flappers' and proceeded to put over us the rough stuff which he assured us we should need when up against 'Jerry.' As the rest of the class consisted mainly of miners and other such tough fellows, I dropped in for most of his clever demonstrations. He would shout 'Point,' and as I lunged at him he promptly disarmed me, cracking my wrist

in the process, and then jabbing me in the chest with his bayonet, pushing until the spring was well home. Then like a piece of meat at the end of a skewer he would march me round the square, developing his favourite flapper theme as he went, and finally with an extra jab leaving me on my backside for the amusement of the remainder of the squad. One other who had volunteered for this amusing play, a man who I guessed was a navvy when at home, failed to see the humour of this kind of instruction. Having taken one or two nasty jabs which he seemed to resent, he clubbed his dummy rifle and struck the breezy instructor a terrific blow on the side of the head. We all expected serious trouble as a result of this unexpected but effective way of dealing with him. Nothing was heard of the incident, however; apparently the instructor had his own reasons for not reporting the matter.

As the days passed, things began to improve in the way of better discipline all round. What had been an ungodly rabble began to take on itself the semblance of a battalion of soldiers. The more apt amongst those who joined were being turned into N.C.O.s, bringing order into the mob and assisting the few overworked officers in their difficult task of turning a thousand utterly ignorant and undisciplined men into efficient soldiers. A few weeks after joining the battalion I caught a bad chill, due, I thought, to standing on parade in clothes wet with perspiration after physical exercises conducted before breakfast. I did not wish to report sick, as the sick parade had a bad name with the authorities.

However, feeling too ill to carry on, I decided to chance the consequences and joined the enormous queue that paraded daily outside the medical officer's office. After hours of waiting I was at last bellowed into the presence of the harassed and suspicious M.O. "What's the matter with you?" he snapped, as I rolled up in front of him. "I have a chill," I said rather lamely. It sounded so futile, and

I was still smarting under the bayonet instructor's allusions to flappers. "Well, what do you want me to do about it?" Then I had an inspiration. "I want a bath. I haven't had one for six weeks." "I don't bath the men," said the M.O. sarcastically. I explained that it was apparently impossible to get a bath without authority from someone higher in the world than a regimental sergeant-major. He looked at me for a minute, wrote out an order for a bath, said "Medicine and Duty," and dismissed me with a nod. I looked at the paper he handed to me and hesitated. "Well," he said, irritably, "what are you waiting for?" "Could the order be altered to a bath *every* week?" I asked, very mildly. He took the paper and added 'every week,' and I departed with another problem solved. I could at least feel fresh and clean on Sunday if I had to remain sticky all the week.

I was building up a civilization for myself. A good meal, a bath once a week, things were looking up. Now I must get a decent bed if that were possible. I was tired of sharing the floor of a room, built to hold twenty-five men, with fifty-seven. The medicine I never saw and the light duty consisted of working in the orderly room from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. I preferred the heavy duty. During the time I was ill, feeling very depressed and lying in a corner of the barrack room, I heard a familiar voice outside saying: "Where is he, we must get him out of this?" Into the room came an old regular soldier who had worked at our factory for a number of years. He was over age but had followed me to Aldershot to see if he could join the party and keep an eye on us. He soon got busy pulling a few strings and I found myself in a real bed sharing a room in the married quarters, now used as extra housing for the over-crowded barracks. It was quite comfortable in this little house which I shared with my good samaritan, another sergeant and the company sergeant-major. Things were indeed looking up, and I was more than grateful for the comparative privacy my new quarters afforded me. To get

away from the crowd, even for a few minutes, was a luxury. I was more than weary of the shouting and swearing, seething mass of humanity that surrounded me from morning until night.

Shortly after my return to normal duties I was informed by the company sergeant-major that I had been selected with a sergeant from another company to go to Chelsea for a special course with the Guards. I was delighted at the prospect of a week or two in London and not a little intrigued with the idea of making a working acquaintance with the Guards. In due course I set off on my new venture and can well remember trudging through the gloomy entrance of Chelsea barracks, kit-bag on my shoulder. Although a corporal I was nearly frightened into saying "Good-evening, sir," to the alarming looking sentry, who gazed haughtily at me from under the peak of his cap, set well on the nose. I felt that I must appear to this supercilious guardsman as the complete military rabbit. Having reported my arrival and obtained permission to sleep out of barracks, I dumped my kit and set off for the West End in search of food and change of scene.

It was then the month of November, 1914, and London was all war fever and soldiers. Men in uniform, though a damned nuisance at Aldershot, were still heroes in London, and I thoroughly enjoyed the sensation of being 'looked at as a civilized being' by the civilians one encountered, instead of being avoided like a man stricken with the plague.

I made for the Trocadero, where men in uniform were still served, and ordered myself an 'out-size' dinner. Luxuriating in a soft chair in an attitude as far removed from that of 'standing to attention' as I could get into without actually lying on my back on the floor, I toyed with olives and drank in the gay scene before me—gay is a comparative term. Neither before nor since that time have I particularly noticed the gaiety of feeding alone at the Trocadero, but then it was definitely gay, hilariously gay.

At least it seemed so after night duty in the Dry Canteen at Aldershot, stifled with the smell of fish and chips and vinegar. In a quiet corner on my right there sat an officer in the Artists Rifles with a very charming girl. They were deeply engrossed with each other and I could not help watching them, such a sight of civilized happiness being refreshing to my eyes after the prison life of barracks. Towards the end of their dinner this couple's conversation seemed to flag, and as I watched them through a haze of cigarette smoke the band struck up some rather sentimental, popular tune, whereupon the girl buried her face in her hands, her body shaking with her sobs. The man, embarrassed as only Englishmen can be at the display of emotion, did his best to comfort her, and I looked the other way. These were the tragic little scenes that were becoming more common every day, and which were to be the everyday part of London life in the years to follow. On my way back to my rooms near Chelsea barracks I travelled by tube. The train, being crowded, I stood by the door, and I suppose was still thinking of the little tragedy of parting I had just witnessed. Stopping at a station on the way a little grey-haired old lady got up to leave the train, and as she passed me she touched my hand very gently, and looking up at me said, ever so softly: "God bless you, my boy."

I enjoyed the course with the Guards. It was very strenuous in some ways, but the hours were short. We had to move whilst on parade, but were not kept at drill for long periods, as was the case at Aldershot. The training gave me the confidence that I lacked, and though scared at first I soon fell into the routine which acted as a mental and physical tonic. In the evening I was able to see some of my friends, which was a pleasant change after the isolation of my life at Aldershot.

On my return to Aldershot I found the battalion still further advanced in its training, and through the constant flow of men to the district and formation of new battalions,

fast taking upon itself all the superior airs of the Senior unit. There were now two new battalions of the same regiment for whom we lost no time in finding unpleasant nick-names. We made local history when we did our firing course, we were very efficient in the field, and added unto ourselves the crowning dignity of a batch of new subalterns. These young officers, the first of our temporary gentlemen, were the objects of the critical curiosity of the N.C.O.s. Their Sam Brownes were new and they seemed very conscious of their swords and uncertain of their drill. We looked at them from under the peaks of our caps and at once felt like old campaigners. I was conscious of the glamour surrounding me as a result of my course with the Guards. I was also conscious of a feeling that I had added inches to my height and chest.

My Company Commander sent for me and questioned me on my experiences at Chelsea, and it was obvious that the name of the Guards was one to be conjured with in the Army. I found on my return that most of the party who joined with me had either been promoted or given special jobs, such as machine gunner, and were, therefore, somewhat dispersed. This relieved me of any responsibility I had felt towards them. They were making good on their own account, which split up the original party and left me quite alone without any particular personal attachment. I began to think of trying to get a move on myself. I had with me the necessary form, duly filled in, with which one applied for a commission, and decided to make use of it. I sent it to the C.O. through the proper channels, only to be informed that he declined to move in the matter. I was very disappointed, particularly as I had read in the papers at the time I joined the Army that the best way to improve one's chance of obtaining a commission was to join up at once and gain all the experience one could in the ranks. This I soon discovered was merely an advertising slogan, designed to improve recruiting, for

men I had left at home were appearing as officers in various units around me. However, there was nothing that I could do. I was merely one in a hundred thousand men now assembled in and around Aldershot. One in the First Hundred Thousand, as I discovered later, when Ian Hay had made it famous.

Feeling rather bitter at the curt treatment of my application for a commission I wrote to an old friend to whom I unburdened my depressed soul. I had no idea when writing that I was doing anything more than getting it off my chest. By return of post I received a letter from my friend asking me if I would like him to write to some of his soldier friends and put my case before them. He had strings to pull that proved very successful. I soon became embarrassed by a number of different chances that materialized as a result of my friend's interest. I was not, however, to move on without still further humiliation. One morning I was sent for by my Company Commander, who informed me in front of the company subalterns—amongst whom was a relative of mine—that the Colonel was willing to let me go, having had a letter on my behalf from a distinguished soldier, but he added, "the Colonel wishes you to understand that your commission will be in a newer formation that will probably never get to France."

I was furious at the way the offer was put to me, and left the orderly room quite livid with rage. I made up my mind to remain in the ranks and returned to my quarters to write to my friend and ask him not to bother himself any further on my behalf. On arriving at my quarters I ran into an officer who was discussing arrangements for firing with a sergeant who shared them with me. I suppose my face must have advertised my bad tempers, because the officer looked at me, laughed and said: "Hello, corporal, what's the matter with you?" I told him what had happened, being far too upset to worry about the niceties of discipline. He put his hand on my shoulder and said:

“Don’t you bother about what the Colonel says, you just take a commission in any battalion that is going. You will be in France all right long before this bloody war is over.” I was so cheered by this advice given in a very kindly way that I wrote to my friend and asked him to fix up an appointment with his soldier friend. This he did for me, enclosing another offer from a very distinguished General in Ireland. This was followed by a letter from a lady friend who asked me if I would accept a commission in another battalion then being formed in London.

The scene had changed with a vengeance. A few days ago I was the lance-corporal without hope, cast off from the possibility of doing anything for myself. Now I was in a position to pick and choose. I chuckled to myself as I re-read my friend’s letter in which he wrote : ‘General —— is very sorry that he cannot guarantee you a commission in his own regiment, the —— Hussars, but he will be pleased to fix you up in his division.’ I was now worried lest picking and choosing between these offers I should let myself down altogether. I accepted the first I had received, which was in a northern regiment, and applied for leave to enable me to go north and keep an appointment with the commanding officer. We were then in billets in Hampshire, having recently moved out of Aldershot, and I was much happier in the country away from the bustle of Aldershot where one was harried by military police after the manner of ticket-of-leave men. I received my permission to go north, though refused the privilege of going in mufti, which I had asked for, thinking that I should be more at my ease in civilian clothes than in uniform, which would make it necessary for me to stand at attention during my interview. I felt rather sad as I marched my humble section back to billets for the last time. I was to leave in the morning and I felt certain that I should not return again to my first battalion. There was no one to wish me luck when I left for home. I was glad of the move, how-

ever, and quite ready to overlook any coldness about my departure.

The interview with my new Colonel was short, kindly, and businesslike, at the end of which I was told to go home, buy myself the necessary kit and await further instructions. Thus I obtained a very welcome six or seven days' leave at home before receiving a wire ordering me to join my new unit forthwith. What a change it was. For weeks I was like a man in a dream. I reported myself to the Adjutant, who gave me a list of houses in the district at which I could apply for a billet. The men were housed in an empty factory which made excellent barracks. The officers' mess was in the local town hall and their billets amongst the various houses in the immediate district. It was late in the evening before I could get away to fix up my billet. I called at two of these houses but could make no one hear my repeated ringing of the door-bell. At one of these houses I noticed a movement of the curtains in the front room, which suggested that I was being watched from behind them. No one came to the door, however, and it became obvious that officers in search of billets were not at all popular.

It was getting quite late at night when I arrived at the last of the addresses given to me. It was a modern house, roomy and well-built. I was getting tired and irritable when I pressed the bell with the determination to get in at all costs. The door was opened by a lady who regarded me with undisguised suspicion, not to say distaste. I told her of my errand, doing my best with what I hoped was an ingratiating smile. It was not necessary to be unduly sensitive to realize that I was unwelcome. The lady started at once to give all the reasons she could think of why it was quite out of the question to put me up. "My husband is out," she said, and she would have to get his permission. Unfortunately for the success of that particular story her husband appeared in the hall at that moment. I hailed him

as he was crossing the hall and whilst insinuating myself into the house I told my tale, adding that I was extremely weary with my unsuccessful attempts to find a bed. He was beginning to relent and I forced the pace by asking him if he knew of anyone I could send to the station to collect my kit. By this time I was well inside the hall trying to appear like the welcome visitor. Actually I had no intention of being turned down again. The lady of the house was still apparently full of resentment, so turning to her I said: "I am very sorry to have to force myself on you in this unmannerly fashion, but it can't be helped. There is a war on, which is putting us all to a great deal of inconvenience. You may dislike the look of me, madam, but I assure you that when you get used to me you will become quite fond of me ; people do, you know." Here I did some more ingratiating stuff. The effect of my attempt at being affable was to make the atmosphere even colder, and it was obvious that I should have to content myself with the role of unwanted guest.

After I had been in the house for some days and the north-country reserve had been broken down, I found my one-time unwilling hostess the very soul of hospitality and kindness. As I had predicted, with use I became a welcome member of the family and my hostess showed in many little ways that I was a good boy, not at all dangerous, in fact really rather a pleasant lodger. She gave me tea before breakfast and showered bath-towels on me as a novel way of letting me know I was forgiven. She, in fact, 'said it with towels.' There were dozens of them, of all kinds of softness, and in all shades of blue, mauve, and pink.

I had spent six months as an N.C.O. in a very hard school without once having been on the mat. I had not been in my new unit as an officer for many days before I found myself in the orderly room. With the change of circumstance I seemed to have entered on a career of crime. To this orderly room I went to answer the charge of failing

to salute a field officer, endangering the lives of my men when on the range by marching a butt party out of the butts whilst the firing was still in progress ; and neglecting my duties as orderly officer. In addition to these grave crimes I was constantly in hot water with officers of varying seniority for minor offences, which consisted in the main of omitting to take them at their own valuation, looking as if I might be insubordinate, and failing to appreciate my own utter unimportance.

On the whole my brothers in arms were a delightful lot of fellows, amongst whom I made many friends and the time spent with my new battalion was very happy. My troubles with my seniors were more than balanced by the unexpected luxury of my new conditions. It seemed to me that the men in my new battalion had a far easier time than the officers of the battalion I had left, toiling in Hampshire. The food was excellent, the quarters comfortable, and the days not over-filled with hard work. I had no instructions in the duties of an officer, with the result that my first weeks in the regiment were spent in picking things up as best I might. I received my orders, which I had to carry out largely by guessing or guided by what I had been able to observe whilst in the ranks. This lack of training with any form of O.T.C. may have been responsible for the differences that arose between the seniors and myself. Another factor which regular officers seemed unable to appreciate was the age of the junior subalterns, which was frequently greater than, or at least equal to, that of the senior officers. Under these circumstances it was difficult for some of the subalterns of between thirty and forty years of age to behave in mess with the same youthful diffidence one would expect from boys fresh from Sandhurst. Many of us, though extremely junior in the military sense of the word, were actually men with considerable experience of the world, and in some cases fresh from having given up civilian posts of responsibility in order to join the Army.

We did our best to assume the air of boys fresh from school when dealing with our 'seniors' who were often many years younger than ourselves, but such a pose when successful seemed flippant, and at all times extremely irritating to our senior 'juniors,' especially when they happened to lack the sense of humour necessary to deal with this rather Gilbertian situation. If this unusual state of things caused some complications amongst the officers it was even more difficult with the men, who were largely composed of public schoolboys with a considerable sprinkling of business and professional men of varying degrees of importance in civil life. I remember on joining the battalion asking the company sergeant-major if he could find me a servant in my platoon. "That is rather difficult in your platoon, sir," he said, "but I will see what I can do." He told me later that he thought he had fixed me up with a good man. I said: "Is he an early riser and good cleaner?" The company sergeant-major smiled: "I don't know about that, sir; you see, he is a solicitor." "But," I said, "I don't want a solicitor for a servant. I should expect him to charge me six and eightpence every time he cleaned my buttons. Anyhow, I should feel self-conscious with a solicitor making tea and getting my bath." The sergeant-major explained with great tact that I was being difficult. "Your platoon is difficult," he said, "most of the men are rich or professional men who are not anxious to act as servant, but I will see what can be done if you won't have the solicitor." He fixed me up with another man. This time I asked no questions, for if he is a cabinet minister and I don't know that he is, I thought I should save any embarrassment that might arise were I conscious that the man doing my humble chores was of such social importance when at home. This mix-up of all kinds and sorts of men was a constant cause of the most amusing situations. When playing a cricket match between the officers and the men a lady watching turned to me and

remarked : " What a very handsome lot of officers you have," and I had to point out that they were the ' men ' she was admiring. " The officers, I fear, fall far short of that standard of good looks," I explained.

A few weeks after I had joined this fascinating unit we moved to Belton Park where we occupied the kind of huts then becoming common up and down the country where men were being trained in the new armies. Our camp was situated in a very lovely part of the country. On one side of the camp there was a low well-wooded hill on which we would stroll in the cool of the evening. As I write I can recall the scene from these high woods. The camp lay below surrounded by beautiful parklands in which clumps of fine trees softened the harsh lines of the hutments. As the mist meandered down the low ground like streaks of thin white wool combings through which the roofs of the huts and tips of the stately elm trees appeared as if standing in a ghostly flood ; the last post would echo down the valley, taken up by the various lines that formed the huge camp. At the first note of the bugle our chatter would cease and we would stand still and, listening, our thoughts were dispersed from the immediate interests of camp life. Nor would anyone speak again until the last plaintive note of the last post had died in the valley, which then was so still that one could hardly believe that it sheltered thousands of men. As we returned to our lines conversation seemed difficult for there was something abroad that seemed to make the usual gossip of men out of place ; and we walked in silence whilst owls hooted in the night and our thoughts joined with those of the silent men in the valley going their various ways to those homes where all knew that someone was praying and hoping and aching.

The country round and about Grantham is very lovely and I enjoyed the training we had there, although the climate did not suit me and I never felt as fit as I did in the north or at Aldershot. During our stay at Belton Park I had my

first, and I am glad to say my last, experience of having to fall out during active operations. We were to stage an attack on Belvoir Castle, if my memory serves me right, and the scheme included a night spent in the woods, after which we were to return to camp the following day. About three miles from camp during the outward march my instep, which I must have sprained, commenced to give me pain. Every infantryman knows the unpleasant possibilities in front of him when he finds his feet unsound at the beginning of a long march. I hobbled along with the aid of my stick, every step adding to the pain. I dare not let my mind dwell on the miles in front of us and tried to concentrate on each step as I slogged along—one, two, one, two.

I remember the sickness, the hope that I should faint, the one, two, one, two, of tramping feet, the jokes amongst the men which came to me through a haze. At last we reached the appointed spot and hobbling up to my company commander I asked him if he thought there was a chance of getting back to camp on the transport. He held out little hope. "You know what the Colonel will say." I knew quite well what he would say, but being now quite desperate I thought I would risk it, and when the Colonel rode up to see the men into their positions I asked him if I could ride back. "Officers never fall out," said the Colonel. Of course they didn't, why the devil did I ask? I knew he would say it. Looking round for my platoon I saw them some distance away, marching across the fields to a small spinney where we were to take up our position I thought, I can get to that spinney before morning even for the night. I wonder if I could catch them up; anyhow, if I have to crawl. Why the devil did you ask? kept ringing in my mind. Across the field I started; things were worse with me after the short halt. Half-way across the field I heard a horse galloping behind me. It was the Adjutant. "The Colonel says you may go back on the transport," he said, and rode away.

How I hated it. The permission to go back now that I had it seemed a personal insult. In front of me there was a brook; to it I hobbled, and sitting down, took off my puttee and boot. Into the cool running water I plunged my aching foot, and sitting there watching the water as it gurgled round my ankle I thought I should cry with the intense pleasure of that exquisitely cooling relief. As I sat there a farmer approached me and stood looking at me for a moment. "Hurt your foot, sir?" he said. I nodded. "Would you like a drink of milk?" he asked. "I should indeed." He disappeared for a moment and returned with a large basin of milk. I took it and drained it. "Like some more?" he asked. "Yes, please," I replied, handing him the basin. He brought another basin full and again I drained it. Then he grinned and said: "Could you drink any more?" "Yes, please," I said; once again he refilled the basin, which this time I sat sipping in no haste to finish it. The good Samaritan seemed tickled beyond measure at my extraordinary capacity for milk. "You wanted that lot badly, didn't you?" he said, still grinning. "I have never had a drink like that in my life before," I said. I tried to thank him, but there are times when it is impossible to do justice to one's feelings. In due course the transport arrived in which I returned to camp. The episode unnerved me and for months I dreaded a long march lest my instep should play up again.

About this time I obtained leave in order to get married. This ceremony was like all things in those days, overshadowed by the War. The officiating clergyman was in khaki and my best man was unable to attend, his leave having been stopped at the last moment. My wife and I proceeded to Torquay for a few days' holiday, which was somewhat spoilt by our fear of all telegraph boys. I was expecting to be recalled to camp at any moment, consequently we were apprehensive whenever a letter appeared and developed a hearty dislike of all connected with the post office delivery service.

On my return to camp I immediately dropped in for one of the trying experiences which were the common lot of the temporary soldier. The morning after my arrival in camp I discovered, in reading the orders for the day, that the morning was to be devoted to battalion drill. Under normal circumstances this would have been quite a satisfactory way of spending the morning for a junior subaltern. Unfortunately I found on arriving at the company orderly room, that my company commander was away, together with all officers in the company senior to myself. I was, therefore, in charge of the company and proceeded to the parade ground cold with nervous apprehension. As soon as the battalion had settled down the Colonel ordered all company commanders to fall out and senior subalterns to take charge of companies. With the real company commanders I fell out, congratulating myself that my luck was in and that I should have nothing to do but look on at the agonies of the senior subalterns. Next the Colonel ordered the subaltern then in command of A Company to fall out, and he duly approached and saluted the Colonel, who had dismounted as he gave the order "Get on this horse," to the now overwhelmed junior. The lad had never in his life ridden a horse, and nervously stated so to the Colonel. "Get on that horse," repeated the Colonel. We came to the boy's rescue, and pulling him round from the offside of his mount hoisted him into the saddle. Like so many novices in similar circumstances the blushing temporary commander of A Company proceeded to pull at the reins with the result that the horse, sensing the fact that he had an amateur aboard, decided he would return forthwith to the horse lines. Away went the horse with the subaltern clinging fast with his arms round the horse's neck. No one dared to laugh or speak. We waited in silence until the horse reappeared with its unhappy rider still hanging on, encouraged to return on to the parade by a number of men waving forks and shouting behind it. On reaching the

parade ground the subaltern was allowed to dismount and return to his company, whilst the next victim went through a more or less similar performance.

Just as I was quietly congratulating myself again that I was well out of the circus the Colonel turned to me and said : " Get on that horse. I want you to take command of the battalion." The horse part of the business did not alarm me, but I groaned inwardly at the second part of the order. Having duly mounted, the Colonel said : " Do you see that hedge ? " indicating a hedge at the end of the field about twenty-five yards long, " I want this battalion to hold that hedge." I was quite at a loss to know what was intended, so calling the battalion to attention, I bellowed in my best Guards' voice : " Battalion, line that hedge ! " Then the fun began. The stupefied company commanders looked at me with anguished eyes. I gazed back at them after the manner of a great soldier who had given orders that meant certain death to the command, but who was prepared to risk all on one great throw of the dice. After a pregnant silence of a few moments A Company's commander grasped the initiative and set his company in motion towards the hedge. B, C, and D Companies followed, and then the confusion began. It was a scene to be remembered as a thousand men trooped towards a hedge that could have been held by one section of a platoon with the remaining four in reserve. It was like a crowd leaving a race meeting and as I sat stern and restrained on my horse I wondered if they would ever again be a battalion. Then I was brought back to realities by the voice of the Colonel saying : " Have you ever before heard such a damned silly order as that ? " " No, sir," I said. " Then why in heaven's name did you give it ? " " Because I didn't know what to say," I replied blandly. The incident here closed as far as I was concerned and I returned to my company lines feeling very small and unhappy.

The weeks were passing happily in the beautiful

Grantham district. Around the regiment the social life was growing apace. The hotels, together with many farms and all the available rooms, were occupied by the wives and relatives of the officers and men of the Division. The people of the district were very hospitable ; there were all kinds of social activities available for all who had energy enough, after a long day's work, to take advantage of them. I have many happy recollections of cricket matches, tennis parties, expeditions to the coast with the companionship of good fellows that made the life so very different from the weary grind of training at Aldershot. And yet I would not have missed those six months in the ranks. In that very rough school I had learnt a great deal that cannot be learned in any other way. I knew from personal experience those things that irritate the men : little things so easily overlooked by the officer trained in the conventional way. In spite of this carefree and healthy life there was always the consciousness of the deadly seriousness of the ultimate end of this novel training. News from France came regularly to the camp, with it the names of men killed or wounded, known to those who were waiting their turn to join in the great adventure. Rumour, of course, was rife. Few days passed without a new story of our immediate departure for the front. When at last the day arrived when rumour became a definite order and we were given our instructions for our departure to Salisbury Plain, tennis parties were cancelled hurriedly, rooms given up, and arrangements made for the departure of wives and sweet-hearts. As the battalion marched to the station the streets were lined with old and new friends. It was a sad day for all in spite of the heroic efforts on everybody's part to appear gay and excited at the prospect of another move nearer to the real thing.

We found our new quarters on Salisbury Plain quite comfortable, but different in many ways from the green and pleasant fields of the Vale of Belvoir. Our camp was

isolated and the nature of the country an entire change from that to which we had been accustomed. We were, however, soon at work again, far too busy and tired at night to fret seriously about the lack of social amenities. Our new mess was within sight of Stonehenge, that ancient and mysterious monument that has witnessed so much of England's history. This part of the country was new to me ; but I quickly learned to love the rolling downs over which on windy sunny days the fast-sailing clouds cast great shadows that chased each other over the plains. The shadows as they moved across the multi-coloured crops dyed the land with different hues of grey, blue, mauve, or yellow, so that as one stood looking over the country they rolled away to the horizon ; the scene changed before the eyes, a joy to those content with fleeting beauty, but the despair of the painter who tries to capture on canvas such fickle loveliness. During our marches whilst out on field exercises we discovered many unexpected scenes of a unique charm in the shallow valleys that lie so well hidden in the folds of the downland, through which streams of silver water flowed. Here and there, built on the banks of these lovely little rivers, villages rich in heavily thatched barns half-hidden by unexpected trees, clustered round the ancient parish church. The loveliest of Wiltshire village gems are not for the superficial tourist ; they must be hunted for along those many winding lanes that leave the main roads at intervals and wander off towards the distant skyline without a hint of where they are going, nor any apparent reason for leaving their parent road.

Though on the surface the peace of these remote and lovely villages seemed part of eternity, and quite untouched by the larger world outside, yet over them all lay the deepening shadow of the War. In many there was already mourning, in all there was apprehension increasing every day with the growing lists of casualties. When off duty I would walk with a friend exploring those tracks and lanes

that had invited attention in detail, as we had passed them when marching with the battalion. During these tramps we would call at a cottage and ask for tea.

It was then that we realized how closely these isolated hamlets were linked to the ghastly struggle that was taking place over in France and more remote parts of the world. The women who were so kind to us, so glad to make tea for us in their modest little parlours, would stay and talk as we rested and refreshed ourselves with the excellent fare they provided. They would tell us about Harry and Tom serving with the — Wilts Regiment, and bring their photographs for us to see. Proud, kind mothers, never tired of talking of their boys' many virtues. We would examine these photographs of clean, well-set-up English boys, in their khaki with swagger cane tucked jauntily under the arm, and pass them back with utterly inadequate remarks to our hostess, who with ill-concealed tears would re-hang them on the walls from which they had taken them. Then, as if ashamed of talking so much about their own beloved ones, they would say: "And I suppose you young gentlemen will be going out to France soon; well, all I can say is I hope you will have good luck. We shall all be glad when it's over, and do you think that will be soon?" I would leave these little homes, that all sheltered an aching heart, feeling glad that it was not my task to play the dreary waiting part which is the woman's lot.

It seemed to me about this time that the spirit in the battalion was not as harmonious as it had been. The tempers of both officers and men were getting rather frayed. Whether this was due to the continuous months of training, or the atmosphere of uncertainty due to constant rumours of departure, it was difficult to say. Some of my particular friends had volunteered for other units and departed for one of the many fronts, leaving gaps that did not seem to fill up satisfactorily. I became a victim of this growing restlessness. One morning, after having had a serious and

prolonged 'telling off' by the Colonel, I returned to the mess thoroughly depressed and unhappy. On entering the ante-room I found the Adjutant in conversation with a subaltern. Dropping into the nearest chair and picking up a newspaper, which I could not read owing to my mutinous thoughts, I heard the Adjutant ask the Junior if he would care to volunteer for the Divisional Cyclists who were asking for officers of which they were apparently very short. Here was a chance to move along with my departed friends. I asked the Adjutant if I could volunteer for this new unit. He hesitated for a moment and then said: "If you mean it you can do so, but I was not asking you." "Well, send my name in," I said rather rudely. "Very well," he replied, "I will if you really want to go." I intimated that I was prepared to go anywhere to get away and have a change. So it happened that I left the battalion in which I had been very happy and in due course reported to the new unit with which I served during the whole of my stay in France.

I hadn't the remotest idea what a military cyclist was. It was a change, however, and that seemed enough for me at the time of joining. My friends tried to persuade me to change my mind. They pointed out that I was joining a suicide club and that I should not last a week when out at the front. I was determined to go through with this new venture, though when cool and normal again I secretly regretted my decision to leave the battalion. Pride plays an important part in many of our actions. Pride prevented me from withdrawing my decision to leave. When the day came for me to take up my kit and walk across the camp to my new unit I was a very sad soldier. I hated leaving the fellows who had been so kind to me since the day I had come a stranger amongst them. However, as the new move did not necessitate leaving the Division, I could still keep in touch with my old friends. As time passed the chance of meeting men from the unit in which one had previously

served became rarer, due to the frequent changes in the composition of the larger commands.

At the time I joined the Cyclists each division had a company attached to it. The Cyclist Company consisted of six platoons and was commanded by a Captain. The officers and men were drawn from the various infantry battalions in the Division. The training was different in many respects from that of an infantryman, being something of a mixture of cavalry and infantry work. I liked the work, which was very interesting. It allowed a far greater measure of independence for officers, N.C.O.s, and the men, and consequently called for a high standard of discipline. During our training on the Plain the Cyclists frequently acted the part of enemy, their mobility making them suitable for the part. We would set out on a tactical scheme which necessitated remaining out of camp for several days. On such expeditions we had excellent opportunities of exploring the district in detail.

We were engaged in one of these military exercises in which we, as the enemy, were detailed to try and find the flank of a battalion on the march. We left our billets in a remote village at an early hour and set off over the Plain travelling on narrow sheep tracks in single file, and riding hard in order to make contact with our enemy before they slipped through our trap. During the ride our movements were hampered by heavy rain, and a mist that rendered visibility poor. After many hours of hard riding our scouts reported finding an infantry battalion moving across our front in column of route. We rode up to a suitable fold in the ground and dismounting, deployed, advancing cautiously in the direction of the unsuspecting infantry. When within easy range the men opened fire right into the flank of the moving battalion. With the utmost sangfroid the infantry continued to march for their distant home entirely ignoring the withering fire of blanks that we poured into their flank. Disconcerted by the contempt of

an enemy, who by all respectable rules of warfare should have been totally annihilated, I detached a party with orders to capture the cookers that were rumbling along in the rear of the battalion. From these cookers steam was rising, which suggested an uneaten meal within. I thought that the loss of a hot dinner might bring these haughty infantrymen to heel. The party detailed for this job acted quickly, and I was soon in possession of the battalion's appetizing stew. This movement had the desired effect. As soon as the officer in command of the company marching in the rear of the column saw what had happened he trudged wearily up to me and said : " Look here, old man, we'll admit being dead to a man, but for heaven's sake don't pinch the cookers. We have about fourteen miles to march in this blasted rain and the men want their food. We don't mind in the least being annihilated, but damn keeping our food on a day like this." We settled the matter in a friendly spirit and the cookers were released at once. It was impossible to resist such an appeal and our honour was satisfied by being noticed. This at least we thought our due after a long hard ride through the pelting rain.

Those little signs that inform the soldier that he is about to move began to accumulate. We all knew that the next move would be the one that would land us on one of the fighting fronts. When at this time I was given leave to go home I knew that it would be the last I should have from an English camp. A very wild young subaltern officer took me to Salisbury station on the back of his Indian motorcycle. With a bulky kit-bag under my arm, I mounted behind him and we set off across the Plain, regardless of tracks, at an alarming speed. We had not gone far when, bumping over an ant-hill, I was unseated and lay sprawling with my bag on my back in the middle of the Plain. My friend continued his reckless progress for about half a mile before he discovered that I was missing. He returned, picked me up, and set off again at a greater speed, landing

me on the station with half a minute to spare before my train started for London. It proved my last leave in England, for on my return to camp I found preparations well advanced for our departure for France.

I can recall very little of the details of our final departure. I do remember watching the dear English landscape from the windows of the train. Whenever we passed any houses on the route handkerchiefs were waved by those who had seen so many pass by on that journey to the coast. In those days we were all relations, all closely linked to each other by common anxiety, and by the common endeavour that was draining the country of its men. People have always waved to passing trains, but during those war days there was a tragic sadness in those fluttering handkerchiefs, waved from the back-doors of humble dwellings by women whose simple homely attitudes seemed to send out a blessing to the men and boys passing in their thousands. The men would wave back, crying out, "Good luck, mother," as if they realized that at such times of stress and sadness all women were mothers, all mothers must suffer.

On arriving at Southampton, we distinguished ourselves by packing our cycles in the wrong ship and spending a good deal of time and temper in taking them ashore again. It was dark when we were at sea at last. The ship's officers were very kind to us and we were given an excellent meal that helped us to keep up our spirits during our first crossing to France. Our short stay at Havre was uneventful and uncomfortable. I was glad to see the back of the basecamp, which was too impersonal and overcrowded to have any attractions. We entrained for an unknown destination, and after many hours of incredibly slow travel left the train, stiff and bored, and cycled into a very rural village in a quiet district far behind the fighting line.

CHAPTER IV

AMATEURS IN BATTLE

THE first few weeks in France were spent in helping to detrain various troops at the rail-head, and in guiding units to their billets. This latter work threw considerable responsibility on our men, who were sent out in twos and threes, often at night, to lead tired battalions into villages scattered over a wide area. It was whilst detraining some gunners that an amusing incident occurred. One of our officers in charge of the job was approached by a man riding a horse bare-back who inquired of him the whereabouts of a certain battery. On being told that the battery had not yet arrived he said he would wait for it as it was the unit to which he belonged. This statement puzzled the detraining officer, who knew that the battery in question was a new formation just out from England. On being asked how he accounted for his arrival alone in advance of his unit, the man explained that whilst on the train a horse got loose and jumped out on to the line and galloped away into the country, whereupon he jumped out after the horse, which he caught after a long chase, mounted, and made his way to the rail-head where he arrived to find that he had raced the train and had to await its arrival. His story proved quite correct and when at last the train rolled up he rejoined his astonished battery and was duly commended for his resource and pluck.

Quite apart from the military aspect of our new life there was an interest and excitement in these novel conditions that kept boredom at bay and made each day a stage

on which an unexpected play might be produced. The general run of military duties was trivial enough, but not more so than those met with in the average business man's life. One met hundreds of men in the ordinary routine of daily life. Though all these men took the stage in the roll of officers of His Majesty's Army, behind the scenes they represented an amazing diversity of occupations, classes, and types. Visitors to our mess appeared, of course, in the now over-familiar khaki, and the small talk began with the gossip of soldiers. As the glasses went round and the blue haze of tobacco smoke softened the difference of military rank, men removed their war-time masks and talked more freely of the lives they lived before they had joined up.

At such times there seemed no end to the surprises it was possible to spring on a company of men, superficially of the same profession, but in reality poles apart in their experience of life. As the natural English reserve melted under the influence of good food, shelter, and temporary freedom from danger, colonels, majors, captains, and lieutenants resolved themselves into a bewildering variety of professions. Men we had met and known as O.C. this and that, Town Majors, Company Commanders, Officers of Signals, Gunners, and A.S.C., became explorers, barristers, industrialists, town clerks, engineers, drapers, parsons, Members of Parliament, bank clerks, and a hundred other things that have no normal classification. It is easy to imagine the thousand and one humorous situations that could arise when such a collection of men found themselves thrown into each other's company. It was like a gigantic masque ball where your partner might be anyone from Prince to dustman. This fascinating mixture of occupations and classes applied to the men as well as the officers, so that a lad fresh from a bank at home might easily find himself in the position of handing out C.B. to a director of an important concern. In the early days of the War Gilbertian situations were extremely common through men being

allocated jobs as soldiers without reference to their civil occupations. Assistants in hosiers shops would be busied with building latrines and bath-houses, whilst plumbers and carpenters drew maps and filled in those endless Army forms which at times threatened to bury the entire Expeditionary Force.

As life became more and more a matter of wringing some comfort out of constant movement and unlimited liquid mud, those trained in their civil life to use their hands became infinitely important. Technical education soon took precedence over academic brilliance. A good carpenter was worth twenty actuaries and any company commander would gladly exchange his men at the rate of one plumber for half a dozen chartered accountants, solicitors, or company directors. A man's value was assessed by the contribution he could make to the general comfort of the society in which he moved. A company on detachment needed cooks, carpenters, grooms, handimen of any kind with a good jester thrown in. We tolerated Generals, but we grovelled before cooks, and stuck closer than a brother to the man who could quickly improvise a comfortable latrine. Trim-mings were falling off apace, but a bright light shone on the essentials of life and the most moral of men would lie with brazen fluency to save his cook from being captured by an authority in search of such skill. As a unit the cyclists were rich in skill of all kinds and we were often hard pressed to find ways and means of resisting raids on our men from headquarters. It was our boast that we could find a man in the battalion to tackle any job that might arise. Once when billeted in a priests' college which had been evacuated owing to the damage done by shell-fire, we were anxious to get the very fine church organ put into working order. The battalion was duly paraded though as a forlorn hope, all felt that we were up against a difficult specialized job. "Is there anyone who can repair a church organ?" asked the C.O. At once a man stepped forward. "Do you know

anything about organs?" asked the C.O. "Yes, sir," the man replied, "I am an organ builder in civil life." The honour of the battalion was saved, and in a short time the organ was in full blast and we had music with our meals.

The War exposed many fallacies both in civil and military life. All kinds of jobs were successfully tackled by amateurs. At home girls were doing the work of engineers, work that it was usually assumed took years to learn. They invaded many skilled occupations supposed to be mysteries difficult to solve and carefully guarded by powerful trade unions. In France the amateur was likewise invading the realms of military knowledge and cheerfully taking on a task that would have appalled him a few years previously. A few months in France quickly sorted out those of the men who had a natural aptitude for making the best of things. There were men who seemed able to civilize the patch on which they happened to find themselves, no matter how discouraging the conditions might be. There were others who were quite incapable of making themselves comfortable when once they were divorced from the usual amenities of normal life. Not only can some men wrest comfort from seemingly impossible conditions, but the best of them develop a humorous make-belief that made men laugh when they were justified in weeping. I was going the round of the barns in which our men were billeted to see that all were present and the lights out when my suspicions were aroused by the giggles of the men as I approached the end of a barn. Bunks of a rough kind had been built into the barn and over one of them a blanket was carefully drawn. Pulling this improvised curtain aside I found a man lying comfortably on his back reading a book by the light of a small electric bulb suspended above his head. The power of the light was provided by a collection of dry batteries all linked together, and near to his hand was a neat little switch. Such ingenuity, I thought, excused the burning

of light after lights out. I discreetly dropped the curtain and withdrew.

On another occasion, having asked my servant to rig up a place for my canvas bath I went out to inspect his work. We were in a camp on the Somme with little permanent cover except a few dug-outs left by the French troops. I found, however, my bath placed in a small space dug into a bank which ran by the side of my dug-out. The floor was of duck-boards on which the canvas bath stood. At the entrance there was a notice 'Bath Room,' whilst on the far bank a soap dish made from wood and labelled 'Soap' was provided together with a wooden towel-rail. The finishing touch was the provision of two imitation wooden taps neatly marked 'hot' and 'cold.' Thus, in the open air, the illusion of a well-fitted bathroom was complete. In one of the most dreary and woebegone spots in which we ever rested I recall finding two of my men sitting snugly in a semi-cave which they had dug out of a bank and roofed with a dilapidated piece of corrugated iron. The back of this mud hovel was decorated by an imitation mantelpiece on which were placed, at either end, a polished shell-case containing bouquets of wild flowers. These refinements of make-belief appeared after we had been at the front for some time. In the early days we were all learning our lesson. For many it was a difficult lesson, whilst others never seemed to get out of the mud.

Shortly after our arrival in France, whilst acting as orderly officer, I came across a man holding his hand over his ear and looking extremely miserable. "What is the matter?" I asked him. "I have earache," he replied. "Where did you get that?" He explained that in the barn in which he slept there was a hole in the wall just opposite his ear. "Did you fill it up?" I asked. "No, sir." "Did you move your ear?" "No, sir." "Well," I said, "I think you will have to carry on with the earache."

After some weeks spent mostly in a form of general

initiation into the art of living in billets, we moved up towards the front line. The country we rested in on arrival was very lovely, and I was sorry to leave it. Our position in the front line was in the Somme country, and Divisional Headquarters, around which the cyclists were billeted, was very attractive and the country quite different in character from anything I had seen in England.

The Divisional Headquarters was housed in a château that stood near the banks of the River Somme ; behind it the river wound its way in the middle of a wide valley bordered by chalk cliffs. On either side of the canalized river a series of lagoons followed its course, whilst from the banks of these little lakes trees grew in profusion right up to the cliffs that marked an irregular boundary of the valley. From the village in which this château was situated a rough road wound its way up a hill-side in the direction in which the front line lay. At the point on the brow of the hill where the road sank into the next valley there stood a crucifix clear cut against the sky. At night this crucifix would be lit up by the gun flashes behind it. It marked the way to the front line. Half-way between the hill-top and the village stood a small isolated farm in which our mess was situated. This was the first of our billets within shell-fire, and the first of our resting-places in which the constant rumble of the guns was near enough to make war something real and dreadful. It was from this farm that we heard for the first few days that terrible barrage that preceded the Somme battle of July, 1916. We were strangely situated ; around us the lovely country of the Somme valley. A short distance from any of the busy roads there reigned the peace of undisturbed nature. Over the hill beyond the lonely crucifix the never-ending savage roar of guns, the crackle of rifles, and at night, flickering in the sky like summer lightning, gun flashes making a quivering background for star shells that hung in the night, beautiful and still for a while, then fading, and finally extinguished like the lives of

so many of those who manned the endless trenches below them.

In the evening amidst this mad mixture of loveliness and horror, armed with pieces of wood, we chased May-bugs across the fields adjoining the mess. Laughing like irresponsible schoolboys, we ran stumbling in the dusk as we hit out wildly at the buzzing quarry. When it was too dark to see outside we would settle down in the homely little farm kitchen and play chess with a set of chessmen which we had carved for ourselves out of the ration fire-wood. A strange set that would make Mr. Staunton shudder. The despair of visiting chess-players who would 'take' their own pieces, failing to distinguish between the black and white which were represented by two shades of wood, and left unpainted and unvarnished.

In those early days of the War, back areas, such as the one in which we first found ourselves, were rarely raided from the air. Save for a few shells apparently directed at a harmless and picturesque old windmill that stood on a hill on the far side of the little valley in which our mess was situated, there was nothing to seriously disturb us. From time to time H.Q. handed out to us various jobs such as repairs to road, finding guards, reporting on the water supply, or billeting capacity of the area. We were also sent to reconnoitre the roads between H.Q. and the front line. One day when visiting each house in the village in order to make a report on the capacity of cellars in case of violent shelling, I heard a familiar noise coming from a cottage that took me back to my home. It was the 'shee, shee' of a hand-knitting frame. I entered the cottage and found an old French stockinger busy at his hand-frame. With his spectacles perched on the end of his nose he sat concentrating on the work before him. We were soon happy talking 'shop.' I explained in atrocious French that I was a manufacturer and that in the village in which our factory stood there were many such frames in the old stockingers' shops.

He seemed delighted to be able to talk about his craft and asked me to wait whilst he fetched his wife. Madam came in beaming with hospitality and insisted that I should stay and take coffee with them. "The War can wait a little more, mon Lieutenant," he said, "whilst we talk of our business." He told me that he made his goods for the merchants in Amiens. I gathered that his business was conducted exactly as it had been in England fifty years ago. We parted swearing eternal friendship. When I think of that very charming couple of old people in their spotless cottage, plying their trade in the simple manner of the old people of my native village, I hope that they and their humble factory were spared the devastation of war.

Whilst in the village we obtained permission to visit the front line. One hot summer morning I set out with an R.E. officer as guide. We passed over the hill by the crucifix and down into the small town of Bray. From there a hot, white, dusty road led straight up a valley to the Peronne road at the top of a high ridge of ground running right and left at angles. From this tree-bordered road the trenches could be seen in the next valley. From this road onwards we travelled in the battle area proper. We left our cycles near the high road and wandered into the shattered remains of the village of Carnoy in which the battle headquarters of the battalion holding the sector of the line was situated. On leaving Carnoy we entered a communicating trench which zigzagged its way down a slope into the front line. It is impossible to convey to anyone not having experienced it themselves the curious sinister atmosphere that hangs over the front line. Here on this lovely summer afternoon all was still, save for an occasional scream of an isolated shell culminating in an ear-splitting crash that scattered the earth in all directions, leaving behind a pall of black evil-looking smoke that hung over the newly blasted earth. At first one instinctively ducked one's head at the sound of the gathering fury of an approaching shell. Later experience taught me to

judge whether or no it was likely to burst dangerously near. Tommy used to say : ' You don't hear the one with your name on it '—a statement meant to be comforting, but difficult to verify.

I was impressed by the silence that rested over the country scarred by innumerable trenches. On entering the front line I felt as if I were in a great cathedral. The silence was oppressive. Men were dozing in small holes cut into the sides of the trenches. Others sat smoking, cleaning their rifles, or just staring before them at nothing in particular. Those who were talking spoke in whispers. I did not discover until later that there was hardly an officer or a man in the battalion I visited who could speak above a whisper, as all were utterly exhausted and suffering from colds. At intervals we came across a sentry gazing intently into a periscope ; for the rest it was a repetition of dozing groups of men, their clothes stained with clay and chalk and their faces bronzed by the sun. It seemed strange that in these silent acres thousands of men lay hidden.

Looking over the top of the trench no sign of life was to be seen. Away in front stretched a wilderness of wire, wild flowers, blasted tree-stumps, and land scarred with the chalk laid bare by trenches both abandoned and in use. In this sector the trenches were old and very bad. There was little cover and hardly a dug-out to speak of. We were entertained in a shack at the end of a mud alley running back from the front line by a couple of very weary officers, who gave us tea and all the information we asked for. I was glad to leave this area which appeared to me to be haunted by something that one could not get hold of. It seemed as if countless thousands of unseen men were listening, watching, hiding, ready to spring. Over these jagged lines of white trenches there hung an atmosphere utterly indescribable. It was as if the thoughts of thousands of men rose from these secret places dug in the earth, and hovered over them, waiting to be finally separated from the men who

gave them birth. Later I was to know these same trenches under infinitely worse conditions. After over twenty years, I can recall and feel that unexpected silence I experienced on my first visit.

All these men, squatting in their dreary holes, wished above all things in the world to go home. They called it Blighty, because men did not dare to speak the word 'home'; it would have made it impossible to go on enduring. All their songs were of home, all their letters (of which I censored thousands) were of home, of the beloved ones at home. In them they all lied bravely and simply. They wrote: 'We are all right here, having a fine time smacking at Jerry. Keep your pecker up at home and don't worry.'

Cycling back to my quarters down the long dusty road that was choked with lorries, guns, and limbers moving endlessly towards the front, I felt very small at leaving those men watching and waiting in their comfortless trenches. At dawn all along that far-stretched line that reached out from the coast to the Swiss border men would be standing, peering over the wilderness of no-man's-land with their brown faces turned to white in the first pale light of the coming day. And the line would stand so in the cold hours of early morning until the War was finished.

In common with many new arrivals in France we suffered in our early days of initiation from what might be described as spy-mania. Under the influence of this disease we saw in the most innocent civilians potential and acting spies. We read into the simple occupations of humble Frenchmen the secret and sinister machinations of desperate and subtle German secret agents. Whilst this fever was upon us spies formed a very common topic of conversation. Just as the Christmas party gets jumpy as its members tell each other, when roasting chestnuts round the fire, ghost stories increasing in horror as each outbids his neighbour for honours in making the flesh creep, so the stories of spies

acted on our nerves. Spy stories, beginning as hearsay, crept nearer to us until one by one we felt we were nearing the moment of actual contact with the spy in our midst. It was whilst this fever was at its height that we suddenly received orders to stand to. Our nerves, already undermined by imaginary spies, received a shock. What did this mean? 'The enemy are launching an attack on our front.' Rumour became busy. It was to be the biggest attack of the War.

We were green then. Later we learnt that all attacks from either side were to be the biggest, were, in fact, the attack that was to finish the War. I was orderly officer on the day we were told to stand to. The C.O. instructed me to keep my boots on. I was not to go to bed, but to sit up all night awaiting the next orders. In our isolated little hill-side farm I sat alone through the long hours of the night. In the distance the growing roar of the guns, in the silent kitchen of our lonely farm the ticking of the clock, and the strange noises that seem so full of meaning in the night. In the early still dark hours of the morning there came a stealthy knocking at the door. "Come in," I said, and my voice sounded queer. The door opened and there appeared two of our officers' servants. "Well!" I asked, "what is the matter?" One of the men said he felt certain that there was someone moving on the roof above that part of the barn in which they slept. He explained that flax was laid across the rafters above them, and they had seen a movement as if of feet stepping from rafter to rafter. Spies, of course, was what we were all thinking. At last we were to face up to a desperate spy.

Picking up my revolver I went out into the night with the men. Posting one with a fixed bayonet at a window in the loft that let on to the lane, I took the other into the barn with me. I instructed him to mount the ladder leading to the loft with me and to shine his electric torch into the loft as soon as he reached the entrance with his hand. I was

to jump into the loft covering the spy with my revolver. I think we were all prepared to sell our lives dearly. I was desperately nervous and was secretly for giving the spy a good start and then reporting the matter to the A.P.M. However, up we went, and as the torch flashed I sprang into the loft. As I did so a large cat walked out and calmly went down the steps. I looked at my companion and he looked at me. I recalled the man on duty outside and, addressing the troops, said: "I think this episode had better remain as it has begun, one between ourselves." They agreed with me that the least said about it the better. I think we all realized that the battalion was not so short of good stories that it was incumbent on us to supply them with a new one. I returned to my lonely vigil, the men went back to bed, and we talked no more of spies until one day later two were actually handed over to me for safe keeping until their cases could be dealt with by the French authorities.

If my memory serves me correctly it was in the month of February that I took my turn for a short spell in the front line. We were sent into the line primarily for instruction and partly to reinforce the 2nd Wilts. who were holding that sector at the time. We reported to the battalion Rest H.Q. at Bray, where we received our instructions and set off in the evening for the trenches. Whilst passing single file over a fallen tree in the neighbourhood of Carnoy we had our first taste of indirect machine-gun fire. One of my men was hit in the lobe of the ear and returned to the nearest C.C.S. for attention. We resumed our march after the incident and reported again at the battalion Advanced H.Q. It was then dark and we were provided with a guide and told not to use the communicating trenches lest we became jammed with the men coming out for a rest. We again came under machine-gun fire and lost no time in dropping into the forbidden trench until things were quiet enough to resume the march. On arriving in the front line I found

myself attached to a company commanded by a gallant second lieutenant who was, I believe, a clergyman in civil life. Two other subalterns completed the establishment of officers, both second lieutenants, and delightful companions, in our dreary shack of which I have written before. It appeared that most of the officers above the rank of lieutenant were either in hospital or on sick leave.

The battalion was hopelessly under strength and the officers and men worn out with overwork and continuous colds. The trenches had several inches of water in them, and most of the time during my stay it was raining and snowing. My duties were explained to me; they consisted of wandering up and down a section of the front line, visiting the sentries and machine-gun posts. This was tiring work under the conditions that prevailed in those very old and sodden trenches. Part only of the bottom of the trench was provided with duck-boards and one could not see where the gaps were or where the deep holes lay owing to the water. As a consequence one would step suddenly into a hole about eighteen inches deep, splashing oneself up to the face whilst grabbing wildly at the wet sides of the trench to save sitting down in the water. Then one's nose would itch and with hands well covered with wet clay one would allay the irritation in the conventional manner. This process carried on through the night and one's appearance became interesting though identification became difficult.

My first night in the front line was an unpleasant one. I had finished my tour of duty and settled myself down on a bed made in the then common way, from a low frame of wood covered with wire netting, when I received a hard dig in the ribs from our company commander. "Get up and get along to the front line. We are expecting an attack to-night. And don't put the wind up the men," he added. The last injunction tickled me hugely. As I tumbled out of the shack and splashed my way towards the front line trench I thought that it would be strange if the men had the

wind up as badly as I had. I had not yet seen any sign of wind up amongst these splendid fellows and I only wished I felt the same. It was about ten o'clock when I went out to tell the men to stand-to. It was sleeting, raining, and blowing; a more dreary night it would be difficult to imagine. Down my long sector I splashed, visiting the fire bays and machine-gun posts as I went. The men turned out without any trouble, grumbling to each other as they took up their positions.

There was no sound from the enemy and no sound from our side, except an occasional burst of machine-gun fire from our right flank. On our right the trenches ceased to exist and there was a gap between our section and that held by the next battalion. In this gap there was considerable activity due to the fact that a reserve battalion was moving into it. I discovered afterwards that the battalion detailed to hold this gap was the one I had first been posted to on receiving my commission. During this long wet night of waiting I did not know that so many of my friends were lying out in the darkness on our right. As I wandered up and down the line watching the dim outlines of these Wiltshire lads as they stood peering into the darkness of no-man's-land, I thought of those lovely villages I had visited when on Salisbury Plain and the cottages in which we had taken tea whilst listening to the fond descriptions of absent boys. What a blessing it was that those waiting Wiltshire mothers could not see their lads on this horrible night. Hour after hour they stood in the rain, stamping their feet and blowing on their hands to try and get some warmth into their numbed limbs.

As we peered into the darkness we could imagine no-man's-land, crawling with Germans, stealthily moving towards our line. Nerves were getting stretched as the hours dragged by, and someone would fire a Very light in order to test the things he seemed to see in the dark. News came to us that the reserves had moved up into the support

line. These poor fellows had just gone out for a few days' rest, but on arriving at their rest billets had received orders to return immediately to the front line. All night we stood waiting for something to happen. At last the first faint streak of light in the east. Cold and pale the dawn came. As the light grew stronger we turned and looked at each other. It was something to do to see what kind of faces these dim figures of the darkness possessed whom we had stood by through the night. Everyone seemed pale in the early morning light and I remember being struck by the extreme youth of many of those who had manned the fire bays during that long night. Strange that such very young lads should shoulder such a task and be standing there, the first line of defence. It seemed as if England had sent her youngest to do the work that might daunt men of double their age and experience.

Many books have been written about the War, some packed with lurid pictures of its horrors, others devoted to the reactions of the author. I have not yet read a war-book that overstated the patient endurance of those youngsters who manned the front line. There was nothing of the picturesque heroics of novel or film to keep them going, no audience to note and applaud their gallantry, little chance of release from their indescribable discomfort except through death or wounds. Added to this dreary outlook there were endless hours, nay days, of waiting in which to think about the dreadful chances of death or maiming that would in all probability be the lot of each of these patient watchers of the desolation of no-man's-land that stretched out before them. In modern warfare there is so much time in which to think. So many hours during which thoughts may stray from the imprisoned body and feed on pictures of home comfort and waiting relations that people a world growing more unreal as the days drag by. These boys who one and all yearned for a little peace, a little respite from the monotony of trench life, a chance to get home, out of sight and sound of guns,

shells and the anguished cry of someone hit, would joke together, sing as they marched, as if attending nothing more important than a football match. Their humour seemed inexhaustible. Marching out of our sodden trenches on a dark night we met a party plodding towards the line. "Are you the West Riding?" they shouted. "No," replied the weary but eternal humorist of our party, "we're the bloody Wilts walking." There is no monument raised to the divine humour of our soldiers. Yet it seems to me that this humour was the thing that distinguished our fellows from all others fighting in the War. It was the hall-mark of the civilized man. Our men could always poke fun at themselves, always laugh at death as he grabbed their young and inexperienced bodies. They discounted their own glorious gallantry in their quaint and pathetic songs. In these songs the simple desires of simple men were wrapped up in ridiculous words :

"I want to go home
The whizz-bangs and archies make such a noise,
I want to go home and be one of the boys.
Take me over the sea where the Allemand can't get at me
Oh my, I don't want to die, I want to go home."

In a few wet days I left these valiant lads of Wiltshire, left them to their mud and blood, feeling an utter black-guard as I marched for the last time out of the sodden front line towards dry and comfortable billets, only possible so long as that thin line stood steadfast.

After each of our platoons had finished a tour of duty in the trenches the Company returned to its life of mixed fatigues. We were waiting for the break through which would enable us to do our proper job. Every attack or rumour of an attack set the Company talking about its chances of going forward with the Cavalry, to take its part in the advance guard that would head the victorious advance on Berlin. In the meantime we waited, gossiped and trained

for 'the' day which seemed to become infinitely remote as the months slipped by. We were still in the neighbourhood of Bray sur Somme when the Somme attack of July 1916 was commenced. This effort we were told would most decidedly finish the War. We watched the elaborate preparations around us. Just behind the lines guns of every kind were pushed up until they were to be found tucked away in every fold in the ground and behind any available cover. My Company was detailed to take charge of the prisoners' cages, others, I believe, were helping to control the growing traffic, or attached to the cavalry who had been moved up in preparation for the anticipated advance. Just before the Somme push we had been converted from a Divisional Company into a Corps Battalion. In the process we had been amalgamated with a company of cyclists from another Division and were joined by another group of officers with whom we remained during the remainder of the War. The new arrangement meant promotion for some of us and a general re-sorting for us all. This was accomplished without any friction, and we soon settled down to our new status.

The battle of the Somme, as far as we were witnesses of it, was a truly amazing experience. About seven days before the hour of attack by the infantry the guns commenced their barrage. This terrifying cannonade roared on in increasing intensity as the days passed ; at night the sky was livid with the incessant flashes of the thousands of guns that poured a ceaseless stream of iron into the enemy lines. Day and night the roads leading to the front were choked with lorries carrying ammunition and supplies to the battle area. Every track across the country was black with columns of men marching to their appointed places in readiness for the final assault. Aeroplanes droned overhead, flying for the enemy lines in the mornings and afternoons, returning in the July evenings like crows winging their way to roost. We were all mystified at the inactivity of the

enemy, who must have been well aware of the intense preparations taking place on our front.

The morning of the attack was July at its best. The loveliness of the weather served to accent the pandemonium of the final phase of the barrage that had now reached a fierceness that made one feel hysterical. Suddenly the ear-splitting fury of the guns ceased, stopped with the suddenness and precision of a well-trained orchestra. It was as if the conductor's baton had fallen at the height of a great crescendo and silence came into the concert hall with a suddenness that made an audience, worked up to a pitch of emotional frenzy, gasp as the tension snapped. We who were behind the lines knew that at the moment of that great silence beneath the glorious sunshine of that lovely July morning thousands of our fellows leapt over the parapet to their death. We waited praying inwardly and aching for news, news of success we wanted so badly. This was the New Army's great trial. It was their day for which they had trained so long and so hard.

I had moved up to take charge of the Joint Divisional prisoners' cage. Another of our companies was waiting at Headquarters with the Cavalry who had moved up in preparation for a break through. With the first stream of prisoners that made a weary and bewildered way towards my cage came news of complete success on our own particular front. It was my job to have the prisoners searched for documents or letters that might prove valuable to our intelligence department. There was also attached to me a German-speaking officer, who questioned the more intelligent-looking prisoners as they arrived from the front line. My old battalion had gone over the top in the first attack and I eagerly questioned the escorts from it who turned up from time to time with batches of prisoners. All had gone well with them and they had taken their objectives. The news was good and the prisoners dejected. There seemed to be a real chance of a break through which would

have meant that the cyclists and Cavalry would at any moment be called upon to do their proper work. Then came a lull in the operations and rumours of a serious check on our left. The flow of prisoners became smaller and irregular whilst new divisions passed by my camp on their way to the fighting line.

We became depressed by a growing sense of disappointment as days of comparative inaction dragged by. During this period a French officer came into my camp and had tea with me. "There is no one in this army," he said, "capable of exploiting success. It seems that we make elaborate plans for the attack, plans for its failure, but have not the slightest idea of what to do with success." It was soon clear to all that this was not to be the great break through we had all hoped for. The Germans were rushing up reserves, counter attacks on our weary men were becoming more or less continuous, new divisions passed by camp, going forward, whilst small and silent parties of men, once battalions, made their way to the back areas to rest and refit. I had orders to send all escorts back to their units in the front line as soon as their prisoners had been handed over. I had tea prepared for them and packed them off as soon as I could. It was a depressing duty as these poor fellows, their minds utterly confused by weariness, seemed hardly able to give a coherent account of how and where they had come by the prisoners they handed over to me. Sometimes they could only mutter "twenty or thirty prisoners, sir," before falling to the ground where they lay in a sleep that one could not kick them out of.

It was frequently impossible to find out from dazed and tired escorts which division had captured the prisoners they brought to my cage. This led to an amusing situation that proved quite useful from a personal point of view. My cage was known as the Joint Divisional Cage and it was my job after searching the prisoners to allocate them on an Army form to the various divisions responsible for their capture.

The assistant provost marshals (A.P.M.s) of the various divisions engaged in the fighting constantly visited me to know how many prisoners their particular division had taken. One of these men was so often hanging about and questioning the accuracy of my return that I became very irritable with him. Once when very busy and tired he followed me round my camp complaining that I had not credited his division with the correct number of prisoners. I resented his lecturing manner and tried respectfully to make him realize that it was often quite impossible to know who had captured the prisoners. I pointed out that I had to rely on the information supplied by the escorts, who, as often as not, hadn't the remotest idea who had taken the prisoners they brought to me. "What division do you credit these men to?" he snapped. I tried to smile sweetly at him and replied: "All the prisoners who are captured by divisions I am unable to identify I credit to the division that possesses the A.P.M. I like the best." The following day he called to ask if I had all the whisky I wanted.

Every day the resistance was stiffening. It was depressing for us all. Our initial attack had been so successful and now the movement forward had ceased. I sat on some high ground with a friend, watching a terrific barrage that our guns, which had been pushed forward, were putting down in the new enemy line. It was an awful sight. The ground was once more shaking with the weight of firing guns, and away on the enemy lines as far as one could see on either flank, shells of all kinds were bursting continuously. The barrage was so intense that the whole line had the appearance of a prairie fire. The flames of the bursting shells flickered in such quick succession as to give the impression of a terrific fire that consumed the earth. Evil-looking smoke, a mixture of black, green, and grey, rolled aimlessly in great clouds above the flames. Over the torn and blasted plain that lay before us we could distinguish parties and lines of men making their way through wire and round huge shell

craters, towards the inferno in front of them. Above our heads shells whined and screamed according to their type, and a Tommy, looking skywards as the air was rent by the vicious screech of a shell on its mad flight, muttered: "Share that amongst you, you b——s."

Along the tracks that wound their way towards this flaming land, lorries, ambulances, limbers, seemingly without number, bumped and crashed their way through shell holes. Despatch riders, distinguished by their blue and white arm-bands, picked their way through the debris, their legs dangling on either side of their motor cycles to steady themselves as they jolted on their uncomfortable way in and about the shell craters of varying depths that lay in their path. In all this din and amongst all these difficulties and dangers men went their several ways, without fuss, intent on the job in hand, and apparently unconcerned with the madness of men let loose around them. Those, like ourselves, not immediately engaged in the turmoil, stood or sat about with the interested air of men watching a football match.

A few months ago this was a land whose softly undulating surface was golden with corn. A land in whose shallow valleys, peaceful villages lay nestling close to the earth, like lambs pressed to the old ewe's side for warmth and shelter. Through these golden vales quiet white roads—now torn and hideous with the traffic of death—wound their way, tree-bordered and still, by pleasant woods from village to village. Then these wayward lanes carried the transport of peace and industry, were the ways that lovers trod whispering the ageless story that keeps the world moving through its agony to its unknown home. Now, this lovely land made fruitful by generations of patient toil, appeared more dreadful than a desert. Its surface, alternately seared by sun and lack of cultivation and soaked with blood, and the green stagnant pools that lay in shell holes with which it was pitted, presented a spectacle of utter

desolation. Many of its one-time happy villages razed to ground level, indistinguishable save for the remnant of cobbled *pavé*, its woods once leafy temples of shade and peace now grotesque collections of shapeless giant sticks suggesting fantastic forests in which had been gathered trees that had lost their reason.

In this chaos we lived in mud hovels roofed with rusty tin, or holes in the ground partially covered by waterproof sheets. The more important amongst us crowded together in sectional huts or the remaining windowless room of cottage or farmhouse. Outside many of these absurd remnants of buildings were notices made of painted wood bearing such words as 'Town Major,' 'H.Q. of the —th battery H.A.,' etc. In the less damaged villages, lanes and streets bore such names as High Street, Piccadilly, Pall Mall, Market Street. These newly painted signs attached to the walls and houses of the village told their story of the regiments that had been billeted in them. Strangely enough one became attached to the most unlikely billets, and when orders arrived for me to hand over my camp and its attendant cages of rusty wire, and return to the battalion headquarters, I was quite sad to depart. I had struck a lucky spot for my camp and was not worried by shells after the day on which I took possession. The day I moved into the camp it was plastered by low-bursting shrapnel, but though the area around us was shelled throughout the Somme battle we were left alone until the day of my departure. The fellow who relieved me scorned my dug-out, which I told him might be useful in an emergency. He informed me that the Germans had retreated too far to be able to reach the camp with their guns. I pointed out that he was quite wrong as the area far behind the camp was continuously shelled.

However, he was quite unconvinced, and I left him to make himself comfortable in my tent. I left a subaltern behind to see that the camp was left clean and bring in our

limber, and set off to rejoin the battalion. On reaching headquarters I received a message over a field telephone from the subaltern I had left behind. He told me, not without obvious amusement, that as soon as I had departed the enemy had started to shell the camp good and hard. The horses had bolted and broken the pole of the limber and at the moment of speaking the fellow who had relieved me was squatting in the dug-out he had scorned, watching the bursting shells. I told my subaltern to give him my compliments and assure him that he must be dreaming as the enemy could not possibly reach the camp. My relief was apparently so angry at my message that he sent in a report to corps headquarters stating that I had left the camp in a disgustingly filthy state.

Our corps was going out of the line, and we set off on a long ride to a village in the neighbourhood of Amiens. The men had not been on their cycles for several weeks and we found that our march discipline had suffered. Part of that hot and dusty ride was along the tow-path of the Somme canal. The heat was intense and the men very exhausted. We were all white with dust and our faces much like the conventional clown's in the circus. Against our white hair and faces our lips were bright red, whilst the sweat made streaks over nose and cheeks. We halted frequently to give the tired men a chance to keep up.

Near Amiens we fell out at a spot where the canal splits itself up into a hundred little rivulets that intersect innumerable gardens, which together make a huge chessboard pattern. In every inch of these gardens there grew a variety of vegetables. The long straight rows of lettuce looked prim in their fresh green dresses against the black loamy soil. Most of these island plots had a miniature villa on them, neatly kept and frequently of quaint design. About the whole scene, in contrast to the country we had left, there was an atmosphere of peaceful prosperity and well-directed industry. Beyond the gardens the red-tiled roofs of

the city clustered round the stately cathedral, whose tapering spires melted in the summer haze. The little gardens with their boundaries of placid water seemed very cool and peaceful. The men puffed stolidly at their cigarettes as they lay by their stacked cycles, too tired to talk. As I stood, just drinking in the peace of the scene, down the lazy flowing Somme there came a string of black barges towed by a small steam tug. On each was painted a large red cross. I watched the solemn procession slowly carried nearer on the gentle bosom of the river, the water catching the sunlight as it was thrown back from the blunt bows. Nearer they came, one, two, three appearing in succession round the bend, huge cradles for the helpless broken warriors born on the stream like the Lady of Shalot. On the first barge a nurse sat knitting alone on the deck ; her head was bent over her work ; she appeared such a bright clean vision in her red and grey uniform. Her white veil caught by the breeze made a halo round her head. As she passed she raised her head and smiled. We saluted silently. We had not seen a woman for a long time and I imagine we were all thinking the same kind of thoughts in which home and our own women there played the chief part.

Back again behind the lines we had time to take stock of the Somme battle. It was, of course, our first disappointment, but we were to have many more. Some of us were to spend more than two years during which hopes were constantly raised only to be dashed with a frequency that became too monotonous to matter a great deal.

CHAPTER V

I RETURN TO BUSINESS

FOR four years industry hardly possessed an academic interest for me. For four years I was relieved of the worry of increasing the turnover or making a profit. My pay found its way to Cox's without effort on my part, and I enjoyed the feeling of security that men with fixed incomes have, but never seem able to appreciate. Between the frights I enjoyed soldiering and quickly developed an affection and respect for the Army that has never left me. True, I was often amused, irritated, and snubbed, but in spite of all, I found in the real soldier the truest and finest type of man.

Here in the Army was an institution where men did not talk high ideals but lived them and died quietly and unostentatiously for them. So much has been said and written of the horrors of war, and God knows it is true enough, but all too little has been said of the grandeur and nobleness that war brings out from the most unexpected quarters. The kindliness, the charity and real comradeship that are the everyday things in the war zone. These things I know Englishmen hate to speak of, but surely in justice to the men who fought, they ought to be told.

It has been said that war debases men, but I found no cases of debasement except when men broke down and took to drink. I did meet many who were ennobled by their war experiences, whose after-war bitterness was not caused by their experiences at the front, but by the disgusting exhibitions of cheating and selfishness they found among the men who stayed at home.

In war the Army offers men forced marches, wounds, and death. During the War the men who made fortunes or drew high wages had their bellies full and enjoyed peace, but what an exhibition it was. If the millennium of the Communist is to produce a state of things comparable with that enjoyed by the War profiteers, it isn't worth the wave of a red flag.

This is not a book about war, but about business, and this interval was primarily introduced to explain my absence from the office during the War period. In the Army life, however, there is a great deal to be learnt by business men. These fanatics of the Blankshires and umpteenth Hussars know a great deal more about organization than is generally conceded by men of industry.

True labour is cheap and plentiful, which is often a great help, but even so when the Army sets about a job of organization it leaves few gaps for practical men of affairs to criticize. An organization that brings a man on a stretcher from Le Cateau to Oxford without a bump, and all tucked up in blankets and pyjamas, can run level with the big concerns that transport frozen meat.

How many business men would care to face the problem of running a business involving the employment, equipment and feeding of millions of men, when their directors, departmental managers, and shop stewards had to be replaced every month or so, owing to explosions in the works, that killed these important officials off by the hundred at a time. This is done in the Army as a matter of course. An efficient battalion up to strength and highly trained goes into action. It returns a mere handful of juniors, and in a few weeks goes up again to the front with entirely new personnel and equipment, and what is stranger, these ever-changing units preserve their identity, their peculiar traditions, and that imponderable thing *esprit de corps*.

Moreover from top to bottom of this remarkable

institution men are paid wages that would cause the average trade union official to throw a fit. It is a quaint paradox that the Army, an institution generally hated by the Socialist, approximates closer to the ideal Socialistic state than any institution I have yet become acquainted with. In the Army rates of pay are small and uniform, men wear the same clothes, do the same work in turn, eat the same food, putting the good of the whole before their individual comfort and reward. Men will do this in war, but the spirit that animates them in war has never yet been reproduced in peace.

Attempt to introduce the methods of the Army in business and the result is a strike. This thought brings one to a weakness in the Army system. In it, initiative is not encouraged. In theory the young officer is expected to develop initiative, in practice it always appeared to me that it was a bold man who attempted to think for himself.

It seems that when an institution assumes certain proportions, whether it be in the Civil Service, Big Business, the Army, and as far as I know, the Navy, then the fetish of seniority works in a manner wholly detrimental to individual initiative. The youngster at the bottom finds the weight above too heavy to be moved. All up the ladder there are men with an eye for the rung above them, and a foot to stamp on the hands of those who would climb up from below.

The official ladder is always a narrow one. On it there is only room for one man on each rung. Competitive ladders are not allowed, so that all effort must be made up one narrow way. Thus the natural desire of youth to climb is apt to develop into a game of safety first, 'those behind cry forward, and those in front cry back,' with the result that the most important thing in life seems to be to stick fast to the position in which chance and age have placed one.

I spent about three years in France, and during that time had excellent opportunities of seeing the Army at

work. Our unit was attached to Divisional Headquarters during the early part of the War, but was reorganized later when we found ourselves sharing with a cavalry regiment the duties of corps mounted troops.

Before we could do our own job it was necessary to break through the enemy lines, and as that desirable event failed to materialize we were generally attached to various units from Army H.Q. to infantry battalions, doing all kinds of odd jobs, awaiting the day when the advance on Berlin was to commence. We spent a short time in the front line, reinforcing an infantry battalion, we were trained with the Cavalry, fatigued with the Signals, wired and constructed second line of defence with the Engineers, acted as guides, scouts, machine-gunners, and found observers for the Corps H.Q., together with all those various tasks that turn up in war, and for which there seems to be no particular formation, whose special duty it is to cope with them.

It will be seen that my opportunities for gaining experience were somewhat unique, and from them I learnt a great deal that proved useful in civil life. When at last I sailed down Southampton Water, one lovely day in October 1918, watching from my bed in the deck-house the russet and golden coloured trees float quickly by, it proved to be my final leave-taking of the Great War. Within a week or so of my arrival in England the Armistice was signed, and I thought that my association with the Army was at an end. On conclusion of my sick leave I hunted out the headquarters of my unit, thinking that I had merely to sign a few, now familiar buff forms, to gain my freedom, and return to the factory and the old life. This, however, was not how things were to be with me.

On presenting myself to the officer in charge of my unit's headquarters, I was informed that I was to report at the War Office at once where fresh orders awaited me. In vain I explained that I wished to be demobilised, and in vain I endeavoured to obtain particulars of the new orders

awaiting me at the War Office. I thought it a strange world, difficult to understand. Four years ago I had wanted to join the Army and it would have none of me, now here I was anxious to leave, only to find that the Army seemed to have developed an embarrassing interest in me.

The next day I presented myself at the War Office, where I discovered that I was to take part in a new scheme about to be introduced into the Army, designed for the purpose of costing it on the most approved modern system. My new chief, a charming man with a wonderful gift for handling his subordinates—and incidentally his superiors—outlined my duties and ordered me to relieve an officer employed on this task at a huge hospital near London.

Dazed, disappointed, and furious, I set off for my new appointment. I had done many strange jobs, during my time in the Army, but this the last and most unexpected, literally appalled me. I had not the remotest idea what was required, and such vague ideas of the work that I had gathered during my interview with my new chief, convinced me that I was quite unequal to the task.

Costing in khaki did not appeal to me anyhow, and I was indifferent to the cost per day of a Grenadier Guardsman or the cost of any one or any number of soldiers.

On taking up my duties, I quickly discovered that if I were indifferent to costing the Army, the Army was quite determined not to be costed, and between the two of us, progress was slow, though at times exciting.

At no time in my military career did the Powers above think fit to decorate me, yet if ever a soldier deserved some impressive decoration, ending in O, or perhaps G, I modestly suggest myself as the candidate, and this for the balance sheet I produced at one of our fortnightly conferences at the War Office.

All that could be said of this document, was that it balanced. What exactly it was intended to convey was quite obscure to me. The chief expressed himself pleased

with it, and apparently it had some meaning for him, and as a consequence my admiration for his ability and tact was immense.

Here was a truly remarkable man, who revelled in masses of figures, and dealt calmly with numberless difficulties presented to him by a hundred or so qualified accountants. He had to work with a team of men, the majority of whom were only interested in obtaining their demobilization, and who therefore had little heart in attempting to solve the problems that arose through their difficult task of trying to interest the Army in modern costing methods.

On the one hand, a half-hearted train of workers and on the other a most conservative institution, resisting changes with the same tenacity as that which enabled it to win the War. At no time did I see him ruffled or discourteous to his oft-times trying subordinates.

At this period my position was quite Gilbertian. All efforts to obtain my release from the Army were unsuccessful. I was informed by the War Office that the O.C. Hospital to which I was attached was my commanding officer, and I applied to him for my demobilization. This gentleman, however, would have nothing to do with me, giving as his reason the fact that I was really attached to the War Office, and therefore entirely independent of him. Nothing I could say would induce him to do anything in the matter : at the same time, my chief at the War Office assured me that he had no authority to demobilize me. Every string that I was able to pull was pulled in vain. It became apparent to me that I was to remain in the Army not for three years, or the duration of the War, but for life.

I had given up all hope of returning to my normal life, when after a month or so of my new duties the post brought me an important looking envelope, which contained the authority for my immediate demobilization. Armed with this document which came to me out of the blue, I called at the War Office and asked my chief if he would be good

enough to arrange for a relief to be sent to the hospital to take over my work. He was very nice about it, but obviously puzzled to know how I had arranged it all. I was quite innocent in the matter, being uncertain to this day why the authority for release should have appeared at that particular time. I remained at my post for a week or so, until the officer sent to relieve me was able to carry on, and then bade farewell to the Army which had provided me with an exciting, interesting and instructive interlude, in a very ordinary life.

On returning to civil life I discovered, like thousands of others, that the strings of the old life that I expected to pick up easily and quickly were no longer there. Socially I was the complete outsider, my friends and acquaintances had dispersed, all reference to the War was taboo, and the business world that I had known was in part non-existent and part upside-down. Strange men in large motors were pointed out to me as the great local figures in industry. Everyone seemed to be making, or had made a fortune, and was occupied talking and thinking in millions. Modest young farmers and graziers I had known before the War were now landowners, hunting three days a week, attending race meetings, motoring with their families to every form of social gathering.

Young business men explained in patronizing tones how different things were since the days before the War, how the indispensables, left at home, had pulled the country through by the introduction of new and better methods, and hard work: "Damned hard work, with air raids into the bargain, mind you," they would say, "whilst you fellows were picnicking in France doing the heavy, as Captain this and Major that."

I attended a public lunch, arranged to celebrate the coming of peace, at which the committee had forgotten to lay places for some of the ex-service men, and listened to speeches by men who had made fortunes, extolling the

generosity of each other with modest references to their gifts for memorials to the fallen.

In common, I suppose, with many others I discovered that prosperous peace has its horrors as well as war, and of the two perhaps those of war are the easier to bear. Discussing the new situation with a man who had served with me, he summed up by saying: "If we were worth a damn we should both be dead."

It took a long time to get used to these new conditions. Business seemed easy to do but there appeared an atmosphere of artificiality about it to those who had not lived in it during the changes brought about by war conditions. Given time, man seems able to adapt himself to any circumstances, no matter how unusual they may be. As the months passed I became accustomed to the new proportions in trade and managed to rekindle some of my enthusiasm for the future progress of the business to which I had returned. Just as one became more settled in life, the great slump arrived, and one wondered from day to day how long it would be before one's own bubble went the way that all seemed sooner or later to be going.

At that time great men became suddenly small, and others found their way to His Majesty's prisons, whilst many new business theories born of the War, were exploded and everyone had to think again, and that furiously. It began to dawn upon men who considered themselves brilliant salesmen, that they were merely brilliant flukes. Pseudo-clever amateur speculators discovered that making money is an easy matter in a continuously rising market, but that it is a different story when things go downwards with an increasing speed, and apparently no bottom to stop the slide.

Men who have deluded themselves into thinking that they are extremely clever are difficult to undeceive. There were thousands who clung to the belief that their war-time prosperity was due to their business acumen, whilst the

subsequent losses in the slump were due entirely to bad luck.

I do not think that it is an over-statement to say that during the post-War slump more hard thinking and brilliant re-organization was accomplished than in any previous twenty years of normal business. Tired though many of us were, we had to think hard in order to find a way through the difficulties that at times seemed insuperable. In the subsequent chapters of this book I have endeavoured to state some of the problems of business as they have appeared to me, I have also tried to suggest lines in which some of these problems might be approached. In all humility I offer these thoughts on industry fully aware that there are many who have had far greater experience than I, behind whom there is authority which success reinforces.

I think, however, it is important when weighing the evidence produced by business men in support of this or that theory, to beware of false analogies. One might, for instance, compare the progress during recent years between the motor car and the boot trades. In so doing, conclude that the men making motors were far more efficient than those who made boots. It should be remembered that the boot trade is very old, whilst the motor, being a comparatively new invention, has a pull on the imagination, and a scope for expansion lacking in boots, therefore there can be very little useful comparison between these industries.

Similar examples could be multiplied indefinitely. New industries develop largely at the expense of the older ones, an important factor that seems to be overlooked by many economists.

There are thousands of families to-day reducing their expenditure on clothes, food, and furniture in order to pay their instalments on motor cars and wireless sets. These are considerations that are very real and apparent to those engaged in the older trades, that can easily be overlooked by the student of commercial theory.

In the pages that follow I have tried to remain faithful to practical experience. I believe that those readers who like myself have spent their life in business, will recognize the experiences and problems so inadequately set out. The others I sincerely hope may find something of interest in the subsequent speculations.

PART TWO

ECONOMIC MAN
ANSWERS THE ECONOMISTS

CHAPTER I

THE LOW CONCERN OF COMMERCE

IT is probable that at no time in history has industry been the object of such universal attention as it is to-day. If in the past the industrialist occupied a more or less obscure position in society, he has now no cause to complain of a lack of interest in his activities. During the past few years he has been dragged from the realms of semi-obscurity into the centre of the world's stage.

There was a time when his motto was 'mind your own business' and this he contrived to do with considerable success. At the present time, however, he finds things changed in a manner that would have seemed unbelievable fifty years ago. He is no longer expected to mind his own business. There has appeared on the scene a host of experts ready and anxious to do it for him. It seems possible that the practical man of business will be elbowed out of his natural sphere by economists, journalists, and politicians.

The man who has spent his life in commerce is not as a rule a writer. Nor does he usually feel called upon to practise the art of speech-making. He is therefore ill-equipped to defend himself from the horde of writing and talking critics who have taken upon themselves the task of informing the world how industry should be conducted.

In the following chapters I have endeavoured to record some of the thoughts and ideas on commercial questions occurring to me during a life passed mainly in a factory. Ideas naturally arising through wrestling with the usual problems that a manufacturer is daily confronted with.

Problems of making a profit in difficult times, finding markets, producing something that will sell, keeping down overhead charges, placating bank managers, and satisfying both the shareholders and workers. All these problems are familiar to every maker of the world's goods. Their solution is essential to the very existence of any business, whether capitalized for a million or a few modest hundreds of pounds.

And here let it be written that thousands of men have done these things, solved these problems, and in many cases amassed fortunes, without ever having opened an elementary book on economics. Men have done these things in the past without the assistance of the Board of Trade or the Minister of Labour. It is therefore probable that there is a technique to be learned from the practice of commerce, part of which has been overlooked by men of letters and theory. As illiterate men have succeeded in commerce, having had nothing but their instincts and experience of practical affairs to guide them, it is possible that these men may be capable of contributing something of value to the discussions of the future of industry.

The principal 'book' that I shall refer to in the following pages is the factory itself. I shall draw on the knowledge and experience of those men and women who work in factories, in which they wrestle daily with the problems of commerce.

In the life of a manufacturer the factory plays a part that it is difficult to make clear to those who have no practical experience of industry. What the estate is to the landowner, or the farm to the farmer, or the ship to its captain, the factory is to the owner or director. If the owner is the originator of the business it is something still more significant. Its growth means more than the possibility of an increased balance at the bank. It is the visible sign of problems solved, initiative rewarded and speculations justified. It is frequently the direct outcome of personal

sacrifice, not only of material things but of pleasures that can only come to a man through the opportunities that leisure affords.

It may be difficult for those outside commerce who hurry through the industrial areas in trains and motor cars to believe that there is any romance to be found under the roofs of the grimy, shapeless buildings that sprawl over the smoke-darkened country-side. Yet there is probably a story to be told of every workshop and shed, of every chimney stack and added siding. A tale of struggle, successful or futile, of wealth and power gained and lost. Though to those unfamiliar with industry, one ugly factory is like another, yet there are others who can read the signs that cheer or depress the heart. When the oily smoke races in the wind from the tops of tapering stacks, and furnaces gleam red in the twilight, and from the clustering sheds there comes the steady hum of whirring wheels, someone's plans seem to be maturing. Someone is enjoying the pleasure of achievement. Herein lies the reward of many a man of affairs and only those without real knowledge of the men engaged in industry can ignore this factor, when attempting to write anything of any value about the future of industry.

By tradition in this country the commercial man, with certain exceptions in the case of those who have succeeded in amassing great wealth, ranks somewhat low in the social scale. It is not therefore for social position or personal glory that the average youth takes to commerce. It is important to consider the reasons why men engage in business, because these are so often misinterpreted. In the past, commerce conducted on individual lines provided an outlet for the energy of a great number of men, who preferred work which gave them opportunities for original thinking and freedom of movement. If the old way of business is changed and narrowed by any form of national control, such men will cease to be attracted to this way of

life. In what manner will the energy thus released express itself?

The first and most common cause of commercial activity is, of course, the necessity of gaining a livelihood. But as man needs something more than the material things of life this first cause does not cover all the ground. It leaves a great deal of vast importance to be analysed and legislated for. Though it may be that dire necessity is the first motive of the commercial man—and this necessity is common to all life's activities—it often happens that in the early stages of the pursuit for a living fresh possibilities unfold themselves. Later, perhaps, new objectives materialize, which seem of greater importance than the accumulation of wealth. If in the past men had been contented with merely making a living, the greater part of our commercial activity would never have come into existence.

I shall try, therefore, to state in simple terms what the life in a factory has taught me about the various commercial questions that are so widely discussed to-day. What the man in the works has to say about finance, competition, machinery, mass-production. Has he any constructive views on big business or the nationalization of industry. I think we shall discover that he has views on all these questions. It is certain that they will not be of a startling nature, but at least they will be born of experience gained whilst doing the actual job.

A factory is an excellent place in which to try out a theory. The wisdom that accumulates and which is handed down from one generation of workers to another is the result of attempts to put theory into practice. If the factory continues to exist in the stress of modern competition, it is safe to say that the efforts have been sincere and the sorting between the good and the bad has been successfully carried out.

CHAPTER II

THE MANUFACTURING MAN

MOST of the trouble from which industry is suffering to-day can be traced to the time when the mathematicians took possession of it. Since that moment our manufacturers, merchants, and shopkeepers have been slowly but steadily stripped of all human attributes. With the advent of large scale manufacture, man has been unhorsed and instead '*Things* have been in the Saddle.'

The change has been gradual but none the less complete. The consequences are of vital importance because they have caused men to view all commercial problems from the narrow view of the master of figures, instead of that of the leader of men. This change of mental attitude reflects itself in the new language we employ when speaking of things industrial. During the last decade this language has been 'enriched' by the addition of a new and startling vocabulary, largely imported from the United States of America. Old words have fallen into disuse, and their meaning has either become obscured or disappeared altogether.

In his desire to invent a formula for the complete and proper conduct of industry, the mathematician has had to ignore the thousand and one diverse trading activities that exist, disdain the human element that upsets the most exact mathematical calculations, lumping all together under wide and convenient headings that are simple to manage, at least on paper. We now speak of producer and distributor, of the economic man.

We deny to all those who engage in commerce any separate individuality or means of identification. No matter that you regard yourself as a weaver, chandler, cooper, or smith, gold, silver, or black. In modern parlance you are merely a producer, distributor, or consumer. It is only quite recently that the mathematicians have realized that some people are all three, and that it is a fallacy to believe that the world is divided into two types of mankind, whose who produce and those who consume. We speak of those to whom it might be possible to sell something if we were able to please and tempt them, as the 'potentials' or 'prospectives.'

One might be led to imagine from the writings of many of those who take upon themselves the task of indicating on what lines industry of the future should be conducted, that those who are engaged in it are of a different kind from the rest of their fellows. The majority of men engaged in business are no better and no worse than any other class of citizens.

In the beginning trade was the concern of the merchant adventurer. In the realm of modern economic theory there is apparently no place for adventure, for the economists have replaced the merchant adventurer by the economic man. Yet if the element of adventure is to be eliminated from trade, is it likely to attract the same type? Should the commerce of a country be reduced to a routine, it seems probable that only those to whom a regular and secure task appeals will be attracted to it.

The consequent loss of initiative would reflect itself first in international trade, and secondly in that at home. The best type of man engaged in trade is he whose desire for independence outweighs all other motives. Such a man is far more common in business than is generally supposed. He knows not whether a fortune awaits him, he may be doubtful of his ability to make good, or he may not even relish the work he knows is necessary to success. But to be

his own master, to be independent, is his first aim. It is more than probable that he will find it necessary to work far harder when working for himself than would be necessary when working for another. But the reward is in his independence, and for such a man it suffices.

Then there is sentiment. A son often goes into his father's business to carry on the work in order that his sacrifices may not have been made for naught, or for strangers. He has become familiar with the history of the growth of the family business, through the fireside talks with the 'old man.' The business has been the ever-present background. To walk away from it smacks of disloyalty. To let it drift into the hands of strangers is letting the 'Governor' down, for the family business like the family estate is a tyrant, has a personality almost human, calling for all the spare money to add to its life blood, calling for fresh energy to keep it abreast of the times. To those who have been brought up in the atmosphere of the factory, the failure of a great firm is a tragedy, bringing a feeling of sadness like that experienced by the sight of a great oak laid low by the tempest, or a noble ship sinking.

I am referring to the kind of business so well described by Mr. Baldwin when in a speech on Peace in Industry, he said: "I worked for many years in an industrial business, and I had under me a large number, or what was then, a larger number of men. And it so happened as this was an old family business, with an old and, I venture to say, a very good tradition, that when I was first in business I was probably working under a system that was already passing. I doubt if its like could have been found in any of the big modern industrial towns of this country, even at that time.

"It was a place where I knew, and had known from childhood, every man on the ground, a place where I was able to talk with the men, not only about the troubles in the works but trouble at home and their wives. It was a place where the fathers and grandfathers of the men then working

there had worked, and where their sons went automatically into the business. It was also a place where nobody ever 'got the sack,' and where we had a natural sympathy for those who were less concerned with efficiency than is this generation, and where a large number of old gentlemen used to spend their days sitting on the handles of wheelbarrows, smoking their pipes. Oddly enough it was not an inefficient community."

Even to-day this kind of business is more common than is generally supposed. Mr. Baldwin added: "Oddly enough it was not an inefficient community."

Is it possible to restore the family business? It is probable that such a movement will come about when it becomes more generally realized that mere bulk does not mean efficiency and that many of the existing mergers and trusts were not brought about through a genuine desire for efficiency, but rather for motives that were no more than mere greed. The number of fine businesses ruined by greed is impossible to estimate, but it is very great. Greed, either from within or without, is the most disastrous element that can be let loose in any concern. How much greed has that blessed word efficiency been employed to cover up, and how much also—the most difficult of all to deal with—that of democracy? Herein lies the real danger of state control. The greedy individual's power for evil is limited. He may ruin his workpeople for a time, his shareholders for a longer period perhaps together with himself, but the greedy state can ruin a nation for generations, and perhaps for all time.

The family business as it exists, and has existed in the past, may never again take quite its old form. But there seems to be no doubt that in this direction a large part of industry must always move, thus leaving a wide field for individual effort. There are signs of it to-day in the movement towards decentralization, which has been forced on many directors by the unwieldy dimensions of so many modern concerns.

We are generally agreed that a free Press, and the freedom to express individual opinion, are essential to the healthy development of a country. We are also agreed that this freedom must be subject to some supervision and that if it develops into licence it may become anti-social and therefore undesirable.

It seems that the same principles must be applied to industry. There must be sufficient freedom of movement to permit of the best brains engaged in industry expressing themselves. There must be that freedom necessary to allow men to climb without the handicap of bureaucracy and vested interests. For this purpose, legislation must be directed towards the encouragement of the individual. Where checks are found necessary they should be applied to those best able to bear them. At present there is too much legislation of the kind that favours big business and penalizes one of the nation's greatest assets—initiative.

The youngster starting in business should have every possible opportunity to make good. It is through the mistakes and failures of individuals that useful systems and great organizations have come into being. The only effective method of eliminating waste is by the complete elimination of all human effort. The man who never makes a mistake never makes anything. There is no school for a young man like that of trying to build up a business for himself. He carries the entire responsibility and personally suffers for his own mistakes. He faces the problem of satisfying the public, his creditors, and anyone he may have to employ. He must create his own credit and learn to use it wisely, and the penalty of a serious failure in any of these directions is commercial extinction. Yet even if he fails, he is a better man through doing so than he would have been had he never tried.

Within the compass of a small business arise in miniature all the problems that engage the attentions of government. These have to be solved wisely and often quickly, and the

owner, being responsible, must stand or fall as a result of his own acts. The training thus gained is real, practical, and unique. It is probable that men trained in this manner form an essential element in the government of a country run on democratic principles.

Though it would be difficult to find a precise definition of a 'business man,' the term does convey something quite definite to the mind. When we use the expression it suggests someone versed in the affairs of commerce, a man with ability of a practical kind who has tested his theories in a world of real men and women and stubborn facts, and has learnt to reject those found unworkable, however attractive on paper, and to retain those that have withstood the trials of experience. A man who in middle life has generally learnt to say yes or no with the authority born of experience. Such men have often been described in terms harsh and unflattering. It has been said that they lack the qualities that make for good citizenship, and that their outlook is narrow and selfish.

Yet when their works are examined as a whole it cannot be fairly denied that there have been among them many possessed of imagination and vision, who have displayed courage, and have been of the utmost value to their country. With all their faults, and often disastrous mistakes, they have by their energy and courage founded the wealth of nations, made the present standard of living possible, and pointed the way to still greater material development. And by their mistakes and failures they have charted the sea for future navigators.

The history of the industrial revolution is not pretty reading. It is a chapter in the tale of commercial development that most modern industrialists would gladly forget. Many of the industrial and social troubles of to-day have their origin in those bad days of trading hysteria, in that mad scramble for easy gold. In common with every other gold rush the ignorant and unscrupulous were attracted to

it. They were heedless of the mess they were making and of the moral and material damage they were responsible for. The opportunities for amassing wealth appeared so suddenly and were of such undreamt of magnitude that the country lost its head. With a few exceptions—insignificant in number—no voices were raised in protest. No warnings were given by those in authority, and therefore little or no restriction was placed on a country dazed and drunk with the ever-growing opportunities of making money.

The rapid development of machinery blinded nearly all to the dangers that arrived side by side with the mechanisation of Industry. Old values and the ancient restrictions of the past that had grown up with an industry of slow and tedious development were swept aside by a country impatient to exploit to the full the new-born opportunities of expanding trade. It is easy to be wise after the event, but in fairness to the men who took part in this sudden change it must be remembered that it seemed impossible to fit the old traditions of trade to the new state of things, and it required time to bring about new ones. The population of the country was increasing rapidly, whilst the standard of living was rising, and all seemed well with the country, especially to those who were far too busy making money and acquiring new power to desire to concern themselves with the ugly side that was growing in the midst of a world of plenty, of prosperity, and that no one had ever deemed possible.

Industry has always been conducted by individuals, and whether controlled by guilds or governments, the weaknesses of human nature find an outlet. So it must always be: man being greater than the system, he will always master it. The abuses of industry will disappear only as man himself becomes ashamed of them. Governments can do little more than set a standard. For further improvement we must look to public opinion which improves as men realize their obligations to one another.

It is common to speak of the failure of the Capitalist system, or the breakdown of Capitalism. These terms are misleading in that they suggest that a system functions of its own volition, and that a set of rules for the conduct of commerce could be devised that would insure both the elimination of injustice and the smooth and perfect running of the industrial machine. The theorists of Russia are finding out that it is a great deal easier to build and equip a factory than it is to keep it running. Stubborn men can wreck the most carefully thought out system. The human element is all important. It is indeed all that really matters.

The man with a gift of selecting the right type of man to work with him has a business asset that no amount of system-mongering can equal in value. Men have—through the ages—sought for a formula that will obviate the need for constant thought and initiative. Yet though one may be found available for a period, in the long run it will always break down. Those who sit down on a formula make the opportunities that fresher minds can exploit.

You may rationalize a system but you cannot rationalize mankind. It is people that matter, not the little books of rules that we are constantly devising for each other, rules which are so often so much more interesting and significant to the author than to any one else. Men can never be made permanently subservient to a ready-made system. As J. S. Mill wrote: 'Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.'

CHAPTER III

FINANCIERS

HIGH finance and low finance, the latter I imagine being the commoner form, are largely mysteries to the average man of business, except in so far as he realizes that herein lies a gin for the unwary. The serious manufacturer is suspicious of the financial fraternity. Though he may only partially understand their operations, he is well aware that the wealth gathered by means of financial operations can only be classed with the gains occasionally accumulated by backing horses.

It is a wise man that shows the company promoter to the door. Capital being necessary to the development of any business, it is generally a difficult matter for those occupied with manufacture to avoid those pitfalls that lie in their path when they find themselves in need of money. There are two ways of financing a growing business ; the necessary money can be borrowed or saved. It is said that 'to go a-borrowing is to go a-sorrowing,' and this is frequently all too true in business. Whether it is to the bank, to his shareholders or to a private lender, that the man with a growing business goes for his additional capital, he generally finds that with his new facilities for progress he acquires new worries and responsibilities to distract his attention from the main issues of his business.

As there is generally no relation between the mentality of the manipulator of money and the man capable of building up a business, a partnership between them usually provides all the seeds of friction and misunderstanding.

The banker needs security and needs it most when the borrower is least able to find it. Bankers are not as a rule imaginative men, possibly they cannot afford to be so. The man in a small way—which, incidentally, includes all beginners, whether potential failures or geniuses—makes little appeal to the big banking companies.

Modest but honest men in business are frequently amazed at the apparent ease with which the large-scale swindler is able to 'put it over' the banks. Men who have failed to obtain an advance of a few hundreds for a perfectly legitimate and sound proposition, naturally find it difficult to understand how the big swindlers of the world manage to manipulate the hard-headed banking fraternity.

Bankers are human and they love money. They live, move, and have their being in an atmosphere of money. It is natural that to them any one crawling into their bank parlours without money, without securities, with nothing, in fact, but a growing business, with all its attendant risks and worries, should be an object of suspicion, if not contempt.

It is a hard lesson that the young business man has to learn, when first he goes in search of capital, that in the world of commerce it is true that to them that hath shall be added, and further that to them that seem to have shall also be added—so long, that is, as they seem to have a very great deal.

In American phraseology, the business of the banker is to 'hire out money.' When anyone goes a-hiring, it is usually because he has need of something that he does not possess. The hirer looks for his business among those who require the use of the thing he desires to lend, not among those who are already supplied.

So with the banker, his greatest hope of profit is to hire out his money to the business that because of its possibility of growth needs it most. He wishes to be sure of the interest and repayment of the loan. The conventional method of insuring this is to demand security big enough to

cover the risk, which in practice works out in the borrower handing over one form of money in exchange for another. Usually the borrower has no security to offer, other than his personal character, his business ability, and his judgment.

He may deposit the deeds of his works, which are often quite valueless unless in use, i.e. in the way intended by the owner when they were built. It seems that a great deal of the security insisted on by conventional and controlled bank managers amounts to little more than scraps of paper, which though essential as part of the formula required to placate the head office, is not really as valid as it is supposed to be.

In view of the fact that a great deal of commercial romanticism is given birth to in the bank parlours, as every manager knows, one would think that greater efforts would be made by the bankers to get into closer touch with their clients, by more frequent personal visits to their places of business. In this manner it would be far easier to judge the value of the pretensions of those seeking credit. Mechanical checks on the honesty and ability of men can only be available up to a point. Many of the most important factors to be considered in dispensing credit are elusive, and their value can only be assessed by personal judgment. Such judgment is more likely to be sound when the credit seeker is seen in his own environment, than in the position of a suppliant nervously twiddling his hat as he sits on the edge of a chair in the bank parlour.

Capital being an essential part of business, it should be in the position of a partner rather than that of a dictator. It is the arrogance of capital that is responsible for a great measure of our political and economic trouble.

Few reasonable men object to paying a fair price for the hire of money and some are prepared to pay highly for it. Many bitterly resent the terms on which it is lent, terms that are humiliating and frequently only accepted through dire necessity.

Probably the greatest enemy to a sound commercial system is the gentleman euphemistically described as a financier, who prowls about the world seeking whom he may devour. His knowledge of business begins and ends with the activities of the counting house, which being common to every commercial concern enables him to delude himself that he is an expert in all commercial matters. He is usually reputed to be quick at figures, whatever that may mean, and he probably has a weakness for systems and organization generally. He is frequently responsible for the great mergers, amalgamations and combines which dazzle the public, delude the shareholder and impress the industrial small fry, when first they burst into flower, later finding work for chartered accountants and solicitors in the subsequent periodic reduction of capital, and sometimes for the public prosecutor and official receivers, when the bloom fades. Like the modern demagogue he possesses a unique and plausible vocabulary which is constantly being added to as the real meaning of the words he uses become apparent to his victims. His technique changes constantly, and his appeal is varied to suit the popular emotions of the hour in which he operates. He is indeed the wrecker of business, always lying in wait for the greedy or the tired and worried man of business, with promises of wealth and ease, and perhaps power.

To this kind of man industry represents nothing but figures, nothing but opportunities to take a quick profit. Old businesses with fine traditions, representing the patient toil of generations of men, and playing an important and valuable part in the social structure of the country, are to him merely counters with which to gamble. He may not be actively dishonest, but he is eternally flippant, devastatingly irresponsible and essentially vulgar. It is one of the amazing anomalies of our modern culture that a man engaged in gambling with the shares, or pocketing the dividends of trading concerns, stands higher socially than

he who creates the wealth with which he gambles. It is indicative of the necessity for a re-statement of real values. It is this state of things that enable the professional agitators to advance their ideas with hope of acceptance that dishonesty is permissible so long as we are all dishonest.

When we speak of industry, we are speaking of a thousand and one very different activities. It is of the utmost importance that we should realize that the financial manipulation of existing commercial firms and the building up and conduct of a business have no relation to one another. Just as it is possible and indeed common for men without any knowledge of text-book economics to succeed in business, so it is possible to do so without a knowledge of the technique of the financial fraternity. Anyone having a successful business which for any reason it is desirable to turn into a limited liability company, can do so with the assistance of his lawyer, just as anyone doubtful of the conduct or policy of his counting house can consult with advantage a chartered accountant.

In the beginning of this chapter I said that a business can be financed by borrowed capital, or by saving in the business itself. Having considered some of the disadvantages of borrowed money, whether from banks or the public through the medium of financiers, let us see what the practical men have to say about the saving method. Assuming that a man wishes to retain the control of the business he has built up by his own efforts, and most men wish to have a say in the future of their own children, he will certainly avoid, if possible, the financier. He will if he is wise also use the bank sparingly, for these institutions are usually very good friends to have when they are not required. The non-academic business man will tell us to 'baste a business in its own fat,' which means leave enough money in it to enable it to be financed without outside assistance.

A growing business is like a growing family, capable of absorbing an almost unlimited amount of cash. As a

business gets older and expands, so the demands on capital increase : hence the saying that ' a growing business will keep any man poor.' This method calls for a higher standard of discipline. It is slower, of course, but there is no question about the soundness of the policy. Good finance is easy to understand, the basic principle being to spend less than you earn. Obviously such a method puts quick-rich systems out of court, and is therefore very much out of fashion to-day, when the world still remembers vast fortunes quickly made during the War and in the short boom period following it. It has, however, advantages that cannot be obtained in any other way.

Anyone building up a business on these lines is daily making himself familiar with the principles of a kind of finance that has never yet been improved on. If at a later date he is tempted to short-circuit those principles, experience will have impressed on him through years of discipline that there is a price to be paid for that operation. The price of the short and quick way is invariably loss of control, which is usually the beginning of the end as far as the owner of the business is concerned.

If a growing business keeps a man poor, it will not always do so, for the time will probably come when there is more fat than is needed for the purpose of basting. During the years when it does keep him poor, it also keeps him learning a great deal that cannot be learnt in any other way. The use and value of money, its limitations and significance, these are the things that a man learns who has acted as his own banker. They are practical lessons in economics, the meaning of which he might fail to grasp if learnt only from text-books and lectures. Experience may be an expensive school, but it is a better aid to memory than Pelmanism.

Unfortunately the quick-rich methods of the financier, so-called, have percolated into the realms of government finance. Demagogues have found it provides plausible patter with which to tickle the palate of an ill-informed

democracy, only too willing to believe that a few showy millionaires represent the majority among industrialists, and that there exists an economic formula which ensures wealth for all.

The impatient and penurious would rather be told that their state is due to bad luck and an effete system, than to lack of self-restraint, industry, and concentration. Democracy in its present state is spendthrift and, like a shareholders' meeting, chiefly concerned with the chance of dividends. Democracy is a far more expensive mistress to be kept by a government than those who played for the favour of kings in the days gone by. Hence taxation creeps ever higher and higher, and it becomes increasingly difficult for a business to put enough on one side to ensure the necessary cost of keeping itself up to date.

In the eternal war between those who make and those who spend, the spenders seem of late to be gaining the day. The world has been encouraged to live on capital, and the world is defaulting. Governments may default, however, only just so long as the traders of the country do not do so. If the fashion spreads far enough, the penalty is revolution. Throughout the ages, that section of the nation that is unsuccessful and therefore discontented has sought for a 'villain of the piece.' Someone who can be held responsible for the troubles that man is heir to—a political and universal Aunt Sally. We have had a succession of villains, on which to vent our bad temper. We have had the Evil Eye, Satan, ill-disposed gods, kings, dictators, dukes, landlords, capitalists. To-day we have the international financiers. The gentlemen who sit in mysterious private rooms arranging wars and revolutions.

While discounting generously the crimes of financiers as depicted by the demagogue, I believe that serious damage is done to the trade of the country by the operations of irresponsible men, meddling in business through the financial end with a view to personal gain. It is impossible

to see how these activities can be prevented by legislation. Efforts to restrict them have been made with a certain measure of success. So long as men are greedy, so long as men are vain and business success is measured by the size and bulk of its operations rather than its quality, so long will the financial pirate continue to play the part of wrecker.

The most helpful method of countering these activities lies in every form of encouragement of serious business effort by individuals. The great banks could do a great deal by fostering the personal touch. More discretion should be allowed to the man on the spot, together with a more definitely declared policy of encouragement of the little man. On the part of the Government a reduction of taxation, with a premium on personal and individual effort, would do much to put new heart into the potential employer. It is the smaller employers who, being in the majority, will do the most towards the solution of the unemployment, and it should therefore be the first duty of the Government to assist them.

CHAPTER IV

COMPETITION

‘A disposition for cheapness and not for excellence of workmanship is the most frequent and certain cause of decay and destruction of art and manufacture.’

JOHN RUSKIN.

THE man in the street has no surer safeguard than the existence of fair and healthy competition among the manufacturers and retailers who exist for the purpose of supplying his needs. In emphasising this fact it is important to bear in mind the interdependence of one section of society upon another. The producer is entitled to a fair price that will adequately compensate him for his labours. The consumer has a right to expect a fair deal that ensures him obtaining value for his expenditure. As soon as we realize that we all have a vital economic interest in the prosperity of the other fellow, we can examine the element of free competition with some hope of assessing its place in the general economic scheme.

Unrestricted competition can become a positive curse to the producer and retailer and ultimately to the general public. There are always those engaged in manufacture who seem to be possessed of one method only of trying to secure a position for themselves—that of underselling their competitors—in their particular trade. Their business lives may or may not be long, according to many different combinations of chance, but their methods can inflict serious damage to legitimate traders, so long as their operations last. A succession of these trade pirates quoting un-economic prices makes it extremely difficult for the serious

manufacturer to keep his business going. This kind of competition places him in a difficult position. He may meet it by tampering with the quality of his goods, in order to reduce the price. He may be tempted to obtain the same result by reducing the wages of his employees. By the first method he will lose reputation and accelerate the process of price-cutting that leads to the decay and destruction of manufacture. By the alternative method he is lowering the standard of living of his workpeople. It is probable that the second method would be made impossible by trade union action if his employees were members of such a body.

The ever-growing resources of science can be legitimately used competitively. Here again these advantages may be misapplied. Science has not only made it possible to produce cheaply. It has also made it possible to bring substitution to a fine art. Where science is so employed the public is defenceless.

It is doubtful if it is possible to eliminate entirely this kind of competition by legislation. Wise regulations could be framed that would put a check on the abuse of substitution. There are many engaged in commerce who take a serious view of their responsibility to the public. No fair-minded person can deny the existence of excellent and honest traditions amongst a large section of the traders of this country. These men would welcome any legislation directed against dubious methods in business. Only those who have had practical experience in business realize how difficult it is to adhere to the quality ideal when operating in markets flooded with fraudulent substitutes. Especially is this so when the young man commencing in business finds these difficulties added to the competition of old and well-established businesses. There is so much arrayed against the young enthusiast armed only with his skill and a limited amount of capital. In this connection our bankers would do well to develop the habit of occasionally raising their eyes from the balance sheet to the face of the man who

has submitted it. Share certificates, bonds, deeds, and other tokens of wealth are not the only forms of security, and the origin of all credit is in the character of men.

I believe that if the Government would pass an act insisting on everything made being marked with either the name or mark of the maker, a great and important step forward would be taken in the direction of commercial honesty. Such a bill would be fiercely contested by those whose personal interests lay in anonymity. It would be fairly safe to assume that the need and value of such a rule could be gauged by the intensity of the opposition to it. The rapidly increasing use of trade marks is significant. It points to the fact that the need for such legislation is very commonly felt. The trade mark movement is essentially, in its origin, an effort on the part of manufacturers to protect themselves against unfair competition. That the movement was accelerated by our free-trade policy there can be no doubt. The opposition to the use of trade marks usually comes from the merchant or retailer. This I believe is due to their fear of a loss of independence of action that might be the result of their general use. It is true that manufacturers have at times spent vast sums advertising marked goods, and by so doing attempted to force the hand of the retailer. These efforts can never be entirely successful. One of the results of this form of attack on the retail has been to raise the cost of selling enormously. Many of those who at one time supported this method of forcing business are beginning to voice their doubts of its effectiveness.

From the consumers' point of view the trade mark is certainly a very effective form of protection. Anyone buying marked goods that do not give satisfaction knows what to avoid in the future. They also know where to lodge a complaint should the goods bearing a trade mark fail to justify the claims made for them by their makers. It seems clear that if commercial stagnation is to be avoided some measure of competition must exist. Those who desire to

see the complete elimination of private trading, point to the waste caused by free competition amongst individual traders. It is useless to deny the existence of this waste, at the same time it is difficult to see how progress is possible without it. Competition compels the manufacturer to be constantly experimenting both in the things he makes and in the service he gives to the public. He cannot afford to ignore the efforts of others, and the inevitable penalty of doing so is failure.

It is obvious that any laws designed to regulate competition at home must be rendered quite useless unless efforts are made to control the imports from foreign countries. The value of a system of protective tariffs used in the interest of fair and honest trading is seldom stressed in the free trade versus protection controversy. It should be the first object of a good government to use the weapon of protection in the interests of those home traders who are concerned with the manufacture of trustworthy goods, under fair and decent conditions of labour.

To allow the best and most desirable element in the commerce of the country to be 'shot at' by the most undesirable trading section of foreign countries seems to be the negation of sane statesmanship. Many old and highly skilled trades have suffered almost irremediable injury through unrestricted and unscrupulous competition from abroad. It is doubtful whether the word competition can be used in this particular connection. Unfortunately there are many people who seem to deny the existence of any ethical standard in business. To such people insistence on some consideration being given to it when legislating for industry naturally seems to be entirely irrelevant. The future export trade of Great Britain will be done on quality goods. It is useless to hope for a return of the conditions that made Lancashire prosperous and hideous, even were it desirable. They that live by the low price, perish by it, and the Lancashire industries, together with all others built

up on a purely price basis, have had their 'innings.' Nothing but quality, taste, and real value will enable our manufacturers to jump the tariff wall erected against them. Even in this direction constant effort, research, and experiment will be necessary. For this purpose, far greater attention will have to be paid to our technical and art schools by manufacturers who hope to live in the commercial world of the future. In the improving taste of the peoples of the world lies the hope of future trade expansion. The modern manufacturer cannot ignore the factors that compel him to fit himself to educate the public to desire better goods. There is an end to the simple process of exploiting savages and underselling one's neighbours. To-day many other nations have become experts in this form of trade. It behoves us, therefore, to look elsewhere for our future development.

Our peoples have an instinct for true design, though many assert that we are an inartistic race. No nation excels us in the creation of the 'keen, unpassioned beauty of a great machine.' Witness the sense of fitness and beautiful utility in our locomotives, the Rolls Royce car, the sixty-pounder gun, and the mass of work in iron and steel. We design clothes for the world. Even in the mad atmosphere of a world war our uniforms were copied as though it were not enough to die like a Briton, but to die dressed like one. Those who can only see competition in terms of low prices miss the significance of the lead set by our great industrial designers. Because mere cheapness is the enemy of craft, it is essential that the conditions that have caused this over-emphasis of low prices should be most carefully examined. Our manufacturers have all too often been accused of stupidity. It may transpire that this so-called stupidity will prove the ultimate salvation of British Industry. But for the innate conservatism of our business men, a great deal of the utmost value in British industry might have been swamped and lost for ever: sacrificed to the mania for

cheapness that obsessed such a large part of the world, following on the invention of machinery.

Competition of itself is merely an urge, and important at that. It is the object of competition that matters so vitally. What are we competing for? This is the question that needs an answer before experimenting on its intensification or elimination. Is there not something to be said for teaching our young industrialists to vie with each other in the production of trustworthy and beautiful things? In urging them to employ their initiative in the invention of things serviceable to mankind, and by so doing subject them to the discipline of doing and making things truly and well?

In this manner men learn by their experiments, mistakes, and successes the true value of things. Those who have tasted the sweets of achievement rarely have the time or inclination to haggle about the material rewards. So long as the rules are fair and the objects of the competition clean, normal men and women will not begrudge the winner his prize.

CHAPTER V

MACHINERY

“**T**HE question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master?—that’s all.” All of us find amusement in the spectacle of a workman cursing his hammer because he has chanced to hit his thumb-nail with it. That an intelligent man should vent his annoyance on an inanimate thing, being himself entirely responsible for its misuse, strikes us all as something extremely funny.

It may not be prudent to point out to the injured man that his trouble is entirely due to his own carelessness, that a hammer is a perfectly harmless instrument if properly handled, and can in no way be held responsible for the results of its misuse. Yet such are the thoughts that occur to the most simple-minded person contemplating the rueful face of the aggrieved workman. Should it be a child that injures itself with a sharp tool we frequently take the opportunity—on discovering that the hurt is not serious—to read a little homily on the danger of playing with tools, and the necessity of taking care when handling something that can hurt us if misused. A little painful demonstration is worth a great deal of verbal warning we say.

The world has been playing with tools, in the form of machinery, for some years now, and as a result has hurt itself rather seriously in many ways. There are some who are busy cursing the tools, whilst others suggest doing away with them altogether. We seem to have lost sight of the fact that machinery is a tool to be used skilfully or

clumsily, according to our knowledge of its proper functions.

That tools and machines are the same has often been contested. Mr. Eric Gill, in his fascinating book on Art, devotes some space to demonstrating that machinery is not to be confused with tools, that they are essentially different—though they do fade one into another. His arguments are interesting and worth careful attention, but he does not seem to quite make his case.

Mr. Gill writes :

‘ I shall keep to the old usage and call those things tools whose object is to help the workman to do his work, and I shall call those things machines which require the workman to mind them, rather than use them. The former help the workman to make *things*, the latter helps his master to make money.’

The first point of the argument seems to suggest a difference between machine and tools more apparent than real. Both the machine and the tool help to get things made, and whether used or minded exist primarily for this purpose.

The old-time craftsman who used tools had his labourers chosen from the less-skilled workers. One man used the tools whilst the others were occupied in fetching and carrying. The man who invents the machine is the craftsman, whilst the man who ‘ minds ’ it is the labourer.

The further statement that the tool helps the workman to make things, whilst the machine helps his master to make money is not very relevant to the question under discussion. Masters have made money throughout the ages long before machinery was invented, and the machine must make or do *things* before the money can be made. Moreover, the workman who minds or uses the machine also makes money, and the machine, or more correctly those who invented the

machine, have made a thousand different comforts and pleasures available, not only to masters, but likewise to workmen.

One surely cannot blame machinery for making money for people any more reasonably than one can blame a hammer for hitting the user's thumb. In fairness to the 'villain' Machinery it must be remembered that it has often been used very efficiently to lose money for masters.

However, we may leave others better qualified for the task to find the exact point where a tool becomes a machine or a machine a tool, and to distinguish between using, minding, and controlling a machine or tool. It is sufficient for the purpose of this book to treat the tool, machine, automatic or semi-automatic, as something invented by men for the purpose of getting things made quickly, and as efficiently as possible, for private gain. Private gain, that is, for those who use them, invent them, mind them, or enjoy the things brought into existence by their agency.

It seems that one of the difficulties that men associate with what is called the Machine Age arises from the fact that men have so fascinated themselves by the invention of new and clever machines that they have in some degree, lost their mental balance, paying more attention to the machines than their users and their needs. People speak of the Machine Age as if it were something that had come upon us in a fashion mysterious, and inexplicable, irrespective of man's intentions: like a plague or an earthquake.

It is the new machines that men are afraid of. The old ones they are used to, and in them they see no menace. A plough is a very old machine, and no one raises any objection to it, though it is possible that in the past there were those who deplored the new plough-age, and visualized in the displacement of the spade 'widespread unemployment and economic disaster.' There were doubtless ancient economists who pointed to the straight furrow and descanted dolefully on the machine-dug field and saw in

the gleaming lines of fresh-turned earth a path leading to social disintegration and revolution. On the other hand, no doubt, there were others who could foresee through the inventions of the plough an early arrival of the millennium. The pro-plough members of that early social order would probably have had no difficulty in convincing themselves that through the plough most of the sorrows and difficulties that troubled men would disappear.

Inventors have a tendency to be 'carried away' by their work. Each new activity brings with it its specialists and experts. These are frequently 'one note' men who in their enthusiasm for their particular sphere of labour often over-stress its importance.

The expert invents a machine and possibly before it is finished improvements suggest themselves to his mind. Thus he is urged on to strive for a still greater degree of perfection. In the fascinating pursuit of a higher degree of efficiency the inventor becomes completely absorbed. There is no room in his mind for such considerations as the possible effect on society his invention may have. He is not a social reformer, but a machinist, an inventor. Those who contemplate his work are impressed beyond measure. Not being technically minded themselves they are over-awed by the intricacy and complications of the new inventions. Thus machinery becomes invested with an almost human personality. People in their wonder lose sight of the fact that man is greater than the most elaborate machine. Man who has the brains to create the amazing modern machinery has quite certainly the power to control its use.

Machinery has been of the greatest service to humanity, has made possible an almost endless number of blessings and been the means of introducing countless luxuries and advantages to great masses of people. Machinery has eliminated a vast quantity of monotonous labour in certain directions, though it has been responsible for a great deal of another kind. There is a tendency to overstress the

monotony of machine-minding and to overlook the enormous amount of repetition work that it has displaced. Before machines were invented there was a great deal of hewing of wood and drawing of water that could not be described as inspiring. I can remember the time when a large part of our office staff would be occupied for days addressing envelopes. To-day thousands of envelopes can be addressed by a mere child using an addressing machine. Again hundreds of men have spent their lives in the past adding up columns of figures. This can be done accurately and easily by the modern adding machine. Power-driven conveyors and diggers have relieved thousands of lives of toil, culminating in permanently bent backs and bodies wracked with rheumatism. Moreover, men released from the preoccupation of merely fetching and carrying can be employed to greater advantage in the higher forms of labour.

A variety of beautiful work can be done by a machine, and there is no limit to the hard thinking necessary to use machinery to this end. Those who hold machinery responsible for the disappearance of the old handicrafts suggest that there is no room left for initiative where it is used. This, however, is not the case. Many machines described as automatic provide a great deal of scope for the special talents of a skilled operator. Where this skill is lacking, it is frequently necessary to employ a mechanic to make adjustments to the machine to ensure a high standard of work.

The majority using power-driven machinery in the early days of its arrival on the industrial stage seemed unable to see any advantages other than those of quantity production. The vision of things made quickly and at low cost obscured all other possibilities. For years machine builders, anxious to supply the demand thus engendered, have concentrated on fast-running machinery. Quantity rather than quality has been the aim of the machine builder, urged on by the

manufacturer who could see only one advantage in the new industrialism—the advantage of exploiting power in the interests of cheapness. All sorts of goods were turned out quickly and quality suffered in the scramble for lower and still lower prices. A lot of the work rapidly made on fast-running machines was thoroughly bad, with the result that ‘machine-made’ became a term denoting badly made. Many operations can at the present time only be properly done by hand. This, however, does not mean that machine work is necessarily inferior to hand work. There are many hand operations insisted on to-day in various trades that have no justification, that are merely a form of industrial snobbery. If machinery had been properly controlled and its users had concentrated on quality-production instead of putting price and quantity first, its advantages would be apparent to everyone, and the social dislocation associated with the invention of new machinery might have been avoided.

If the use of power-driven machinery could be viewed from a new and more intelligent angle it might then be seen in its proper place as a useful and ingenious tool which man can use for his own good or abuse to his disadvantage.

So it is with the machinery of organization. The systems, so intriguing to their designers, can be easily built up until they become tyrants. Again the question is, as Humpty Dumpty said to Alice, “Which is to be the master?” It is easy to lose sight of the object for which any system may have been designed, in the job of working the system. The improvement of an organization is like any other form of invention, a fascinating occupation, an absorbing mental exercise that tends to close the mind to all other considerations. Men in their enthusiasm for rationalization forget to ask themselves what they are doing it for.

It seems that every activity should be challenged periodically. Men of commerce are familiar with the operation of

'taking stock.' Yearly, or frequently half-yearly, the ordinary business house makes a pause in order to value and check its stock. At such a period it would be advantageous to extend this operation beyond the limits of material things, and take a look at the objects, aims, and policy of the business concerned. At such a time the value of all rules and regulations might be examined with a view to eliminating those operations that had become of doubtful utility.

Machinery of all kinds needs men to work it, thus grows up a vested interest which will naturally resist anything that seems to endanger its existence. In this way much that is futile continues to hamper progress and obscures the real value of industrial activity. It may be that men are straining to keep an elaborate organization in being, that has outlived its purpose, for which no economic justification can be discovered.

Machinery is a menace in so far as the fascination of its invention and use blinds us to its proper place in the social scheme. Without control of a serious kind, what we call the Machine Age has developed at an amazing speed. We have seen the anarchy of machinery. We have endeavoured to hammer out a code for its use that has ignored the human element. Men will not regain control by lamenting the invention of machinery, but by reassessing its value, its uses and its place in the modern world. We might do well to remind ourselves at our annual stocktaking that as Tawney has written :

' So merciless is the tyranny of economic appetites, so prone to self-aggrandisement, the empire of economic interests, that a doctrine which confines them to their proper sphere, as the servant not the master of civilization, may reasonably be regarded as among the pregnant truisms which are a permanent element in any sane philosophy.'

CHAPTER VI

SELF-EXPRESSION IN INDUSTRY

IN the schemes put forward by the most ardent advocate of the Socialist state there is generally to be found a loophole arranged to allow for self-expression in the realms of Art. The most convinced collectivist seems to realize that if there is to be any progress for mankind, a certain number of individuals must be allowed to express themselves in a manner best suited to their particular mental make-up. Therefore, exception is made to the general rule of collective activity for those who are engaged in what are generally known as the arts of life. Genius is admitted to be something that cannot be controlled, and therefore the great thinkers are to be permitted exceptional treatment and freedom in a highly organized society.

The writers, painters, and musicians are included in the privileged few. The difficulty of dealing with such an arrangement arises when you attempt to define Art, or to assess the value of artists in comparison with other workers. Moreover, is it only through the medium of the Arts that man can express himself in a manner of value to his fellow-men?

Art is, after all, a term employed very loosely. Not everyone who paints a picture is an artist, nor can such a compliment be paid to all who write books and music. The border-line between the artist and the craftsman is difficult, if not impossible to draw. We all of us have seen pictures that a self-respecting craftsman would scorn, and read books for which high claims are made, that can hardly

be said to justify the cost of the materials and labour involved in their production. Any system that makes it difficult for men to develop their talents freely and in the manner most natural to them is a bad one. It cannot be worked for any length of time, and it is capable of infinite mischief during such time as attempts are made to enforce it.

It is plausible, perhaps, to advance the necessity of exceptions, but it is not practicable to make them, and the very fact that such exceptions are deemed necessary is an admission that the whole scheme is unreal and undesirable.

Any scheme in industry, or devised for the government of a country that over-emphasises the centralization of authority over all men's activities, tends to destroy initiative and kill the spirit that makes for real progress. Mankind refuses to be rationalized. Men strive to express themselves in a thousand different ways, and it is not only the genius that has a useful and desirable contribution to make to Society. It is possible that a man struggling with the problems of dressing tripe may stumble on something of the greatest value to his fellows. Inspiration lurks in unexpected places, and man may be packed with information culled from books, but he is only made aware through his work and actual experience of life.

The tripe-dresser who hopes to gain a living by his activities, will soon be made conscious of the great difference that exists between theory and practice, an important point frequently overlooked by the scholar. Men commence thinking in earnest when they attempt to *do something*. The problem they set themselves may be simple, it may be humble, but it sets the mind in action, speculating at first and experimenting as a result, and no one can foresee the fruits of such activity.

The over-centralized authority pre-supposes all the brains and initiative at the top. This can never be so, and assuming that it were possible, the mere existence at the top of things tends to bring about a relaxation of effort.

Those who have arrived may be tired men. They have in any case passed a point when security becomes more important than progress and the natural trend is to consolidate their positions rather than strive for new conquests.

To decentralize is to spread dignity amongst men. The wider the decentralization the greater the number of people that are placed in a position to stand or fall on their merits.

If it is desirable to accord to men engaged in painting, writing, and musical composition the privilege of expressing themselves in their own way, free from restraint by government, it is still more important to do so to the craftsman. The natural sequence of development seems to be from work to craft and thence to art. The influence of a great deal of so-called artistic efforts will have passed away long before that of Sir Henry Royce, through the production of his mechanical masterpiece.

The man with an original mind needs an atmosphere of freedom in which to experiment and develop. He can seldom do his work to a time-table, and he frequently requires to experiment in a number of different directions before settling down in the one best suited to express the thoughts within him.

Those who seek to rationalize our activities claim to be justified by the elimination of waste, and the increase of efficiency. Waste is inseparable from all research, invention, and experiment, without which there is no forward movement. Mistakes may be costly and wasteful, but as I have already said, he who never makes mistakes never makes anything. Someone must be prepared to capitalize Hope, though a dividend may never be paid, though it may be delayed many years. The bread that is not cast upon the waters will not be found after many days though the bread be saved and not wasted.

If modern conditions make it necessary to plan industry, let the plan be so devised as to give the maximum chances for individuals to express themselves in their own way

within it. We have to-day a far better educated youth, ready to try themselves out in Commerce. If they can be made to see the adventure of the commercial life, and given an opportunity to experiment in their own ideas, the result will be all to the good. If, on the other hand, they can only function within the narrow limits so often imposed by the modern big business, the best of their energy will have to find another outlet. Youth constantly and unnecessarily frustrated becomes restless, and energy and initiative unduly repressed is liable to take an anti-social turn.

MASS-PRODUCTION

A GREAT deal has been said and written about mass-production, a great deal that would lead one to suppose that it was something quite new and revolutionary. Machinery, of course, made the modern system of mass-production possible, and machinery and the factory are now quite old as things move in these days. When the first power-driven factories were erected they were still influenced in their lack of organization by the traditions of hand work, and mass-production as we understand it to-day is the result of bringing order and system into the workshop, standardizing wherever possible the various parts necessary for the finished article, and the exploitation of all mechanical methods and the possibilities of machine tools.

The early pre-eminence of the U.S.A. in this method of manufacture was probably due to the absence of skilled labour and the consequent necessity of reducing all kinds of work in the factory to the simplest possible form. In this way full use could be made of unskilled labour and various operations of manufacture made possible in a country where a high standard of skill was none too common, and labour was in many areas difficult to obtain.

Necessity being the mother of invention a great deal of hard thinking was essential in the new countries to devise

methods to counteract the shortage of skilled labour. It is probable that this is one of the chief causes of the cleverness displayed in the invention of automatic machinery by the Americans.

The first result of the exploitation of the system of mass-production was to bring within the reach of the multitude a vast number of things that had been regarded in the past as luxuries. In this manner the material standard of living was quickly raised, whilst vast fortunes were made in the process. That an ever-increasing number of useful things should become available to a greater number of people seems entirely desirable, and in so far as the new system of manufacture achieves this end, all is well, and there seemed little to be said against the system.

In the early days of this movement towards standardization and rapid production, there seemed to be no limit to the possible expansion of markets. Impressive fortunes were made, especially in the U.S.A., where the wealth of certain individuals surpassed that of the wildest stories of the *Arabian Nights*. Just as men had lost their heads in the early days of the Industrial Revolution, this second phase of industrialism, made possible by the scientific and orderly use of the machine on a vast scale, began to affect men's heads like strong wine. People were amazed at the prosperity of the new countries, impressed by the fabulous wealth of the exponents of the new methods that seemed to approximate to pure magic.

Man has always sought after a sign, yearned for a formula that is final and unchallengable, experimented vainly, yet ever hopefully in order to discover the philosopher's stone. There were those who saw in this new leap of industrialism the solution of the problems of poverty. There were those who read into the theory and practice of the system of mass-production the means of indefinitely amassing wealth. We were regaled by plausible theories which attempted to state how by increase of production, costs were so lowered

and wages so raised that the producers became consumers of such appetite that they created an ever-increasing demand which ensured an everlasting market for unlimited productions. These commercial alchemists seemed at last to have stumbled on a form of industrial perpetual motion. Any suggestion that saturation point might be reached was dismissed contemptuously, whilst the new perpetual motion idea was explained again at greater length, and in the language of the modern economist, which was difficult for the simple men to follow, but which sounded impressive and convincing.

Every year saw greater efficiency in the methods of production. There was a strain on the multiplication tables, as the numbers of any given article produced per minute increased. The new school continued to ignore the existence of a saturation point, though it was apparent that something of the kind existed somewhere in the scheme, and the high-pressure salesman was brought into place as an antidote. It was the business of this man to endeavour to induce a satisfied people to believe that there is no such thing as satisfaction. Salesmanship began to take precedence over manufacture. Salesmanship became the new cult and the old-fashioned manufacturer was told that the Alpha and Omega of commerce was *to sell*.

All the forces of art, literature, and music were to be harnessed to the new chariot of Salesmanship. Colleges, Associations, Circles, Clubs were brought into being to teach men how to sell, how to create a demand, how to make people feel the need of things they had never thought of, how to absorb the ever-increasing quantity of things that were being made.

Through all the fury of this movement there were those who had been trained in the old school of commerce, who felt that these new theories were too plausible, too easy. Men who in the enthusiasm of youth had themselves thought that they had discovered the simple way, the quick method,

and who had lived to discover that they had been deceived.

Then came the slump and the house of cards collapsed. The new men had overlooked something of importance. There was a flaw in the machine. What was the matter? Who had failed? From the date of the great collapse until to-day we have been deluged with explanations. Someone had let the commercial world down badly, and the villain of the piece must be found.

The economists got busy and it was soon apparent to the plain business man that they could agree on one thing only, and that was to differ. If the greed of the average man could have been made to increase as quickly as machine-production, the demand might have kept pace with the supply. The greed necessary to keep the factories always busy required a general distribution of wealth great enough to enable the multitude to indulge it. Great fortunes had certainly been made under the new system, but they had not been sufficiently well distributed to enable the man in the street to indulge his artificially stimulated appetite on a scale big enough to ensure the proper working of the perpetual motion supply and demand theory.

Another disturbing factor in the world of rapid and easy production is the displacement of labour it entails. Day by day the work of the world drifts into fewer hands, and the new problem of the leisure state must be faced and solved. Does the average man want too much leisure? What is he to do in his spare time? If he does serious work, which he will probably want to do, he will be back again in competition with the chosen few who have been permitted to remain at work under the new controlled and planned system of industry. If he works in his garden seriously, he will be upsetting the agricultural system. If he makes anything useful he will be cutting across some other planned industry. He cannot sit in a picture house all day, or spend his years playing games. There is a limit to the satisfaction

a man's soul can derive from Ludo or even Contract Bridge.

That mass-production means greater leisure through shorter hours of work seems to be inevitable. It is not difficult to foresee the time when the ordinary necessities of life will be supplied on the grid system. There will be the bread grid, the boot grid, etc., and there will be a great number of people with a lot of time on their hands, and these must be employed seriously, or trouble is certain. Work has satisfied men's minds in the past and they will need work in the future.

Throughout the ages the average man has expressed himself in his work, and he will need to do so in the future. The problem then will shift from that of too much work and too little reward to too much leisure and too little meaning in life to make the spare time anything but a weariness of the flesh.

Leisure is one of the greatest tests of character and the majority are happiest when they have something to do, that they feel is useful and necessary. No one will deny that as things are at present a more equable division of leisure is desirable and necessary for the happiness and health of the nation.

It is difficult for the leisured classes or those whose work is interesting and varied to realize the strain of working on a monotonous job year after year, with a paltry fortnight or so during each year in which to shake off the weariness of uninspiring work. This hardship applies particularly to those who work indoors, who taste the bitterness, especially during their youth, of gazing out of factory windows at the sunshine outside, knowing that fourteen days only are allotted to them in which to enjoy freedom in the open air.

In so far as machinery gives the worker a greater share of the leisure that all men need in order to keep them fresh and keen, all is well. As, however, every advantage gained

can be cancelled out by equivalent disadvantages unless careful thought is brought to play on the new conditions, it is necessary to do something to control circumstances, and not leave to chance the possible effects of each new social development.

Organized machine-production, as previously stated, gives us a greater share of the good and useful things of life, together with opportunities of longer hours of rest and recreation. On the other hand this system, unless carefully handled, robs the average man of the privilege of individual work and thought in connection with it. It tends to centralize the creative part of work in the hands of the few, reducing the majority to mere robots, or eliminating them altogether. Thus the work drifts into few hands, and the control into a still smaller body of specialized brain workers.

The leisure we need so much may become the cursed idleness of unwanted hands. If, however, freedom of individual effort is allowed outside the big plans of machine production, then this possible evil may be avoided and the spirit of adventure and joy of initiative and experiment rekindled in a world of greater possibilities.

If, on the other hand, the big planners seek monopoly and legislation is designed with a view to helping that end, then the results will be disastrous. Initiative will be stifled and the spirit of independence crushed in a state where men may only work within the confines of a hard and fast system, in which the deadening rule of seniority frustrates the eagerness of youth and vested interests render abortive all spontaneous effort.

The mass-production and use of anything creates in the natural order of things a sense of discrimination in the mind of the user. Thus an ever-expanding market is created for goods that possess individuality and character. In this manner opportunities are made for those possessed of

initiative and taste to make and profit by supplying this demand.

For example, the mass-produced motor car brings motor-ing within the reach of many people of moderate means, and by so doing acquaints them with its pleasure. Just as soon, however, as a man becomes the owner of a cheap car, he almost invariably develops a desire for something better, something more individual, more to his own particular taste. In this manner a potential buyer of the better-quality car is created, and so with all things made.

In so far as mass-production creates opportunities for the individual manufacturer, this is good, but room must be made for the individualist to compete with the mass-producer, and legislation should see to it that mass-production and monopoly are not permitted to work in combination to prevent competition which is the only effective incentive to improvement of quality.

One of our present troubles is to be found in a lack of balance between progress in production and progress in taste. We are in many cases producing by machinery various articles faster than we are educating people in their use, thus the supply is in front of the demand. Moreover, too many articles of a similar nature, with differences so slight as to make no matter, are made with the result that the market is congested, the public confused, and the cost of selling increased by huge advertising expenditure, altogether out of proportion to the value of the article in question.

I have suggested that mass-production through the wide distribution that follows makes many things previously rare available to increasing numbers of people, and that this eventually engenders a sense of discrimination in the public which leads to a demand for a higher quality. This, however, is a process much slower than the invention of new methods of rapid production. Apart from this slow manner of improving taste by use and experience, there is no serious

effort made through the present system of education to teach people how to distinguish between good and bad quality in the everyday things of life.

In the days gone by when so much was made by hand, both in the small workshop and the home, the quality of things was far better appreciated because a greater number of people had a practical knowledge of how things are made, and of the various materials employed in their making. Over-specialization in the factories has changed all that. Moreover, the employment of modern methods in the trick of making things appear so much better than they are has so confused people that it is impossible for them to distinguish the good from the bad, except by actual trial in use.

Machinery is with us and likely to remain so, whilst the rapid production of all kinds of goods will continue to grow in variety and speed. Over-production will of course cure itself in the usual way, and it makes no difference whether it is over-production of machine- or hand-made goods. It is probable that at no distant date all the necessities of life will be as abundant and cheap as water, and an ever-decreasing number of people will be employed in their production. Possibly government control will make it impossible for individuals to amass vast fortunes in the production of these ordinary necessities of life, just as it has already been done in the supply of water, electricity, etc., and a good deal of energy will be directed in more social channels.

What of the rest with their increased leisure and empty days? That is the problem which must eventually be solved. It is a problem that will have to be tackled by the educationalist. It is possible that if the same attention had been paid to the art of spending money as that lavished on the technique of making it, many problems that vex us to-day might never have arisen.

If the Quantity fetish can be deposed and a sense of

Quality instilled in the people, then mass-production will fall into its proper place and a vast field of new work will be opened in which to employ all that skill released from the humdrum of the kind of factory work that has employed so many in the past.

CHAPTER VIII

SENTIMENT IN BUSINESS

THERE is an idea abroad which I believe is generally accepted without challenge—that the business world produces a special type of hard-headed individual. In my experience this idea is a myth. The hard-faced commercial magnate popularized by the films is a species that I have rarely come across in business. In the matter of driving a hard bargain I have met many farmers, parsons, solicitors, and soldiers who could give points in this respect to any business man I have known. Men do not go into business because they are hard-headed, such men are much more likely to go soldiering. Nor does business necessarily produce a hard head.

This generalization about commercial men is bolstered up by such phrases 'business is business.' I have never yet discovered what exactly is meant by this phrase. I am not very clear on what people mean when they use the word 'business.' Of course business is business. Soldiering is soldiering, horse coping is horse coping, and religion is religion, or should be. I take it that when anyone uses the expression 'business is business' they wish to convey the idea that sentiment cannot, or ought not to be permitted to enter into any business transaction. If this is the meaning, then business is seldom business for there is any amount of sentiment in business.

'Soldiering is soldiering' surely conveys the idea more graphically. When an officer gives an order that involves the death of thousands of men, sentiment does not seem to

be the dominant factor. Such an action smacks of hard-headedness far more than does the average business transaction, even though the latter involves sticking to a price regardless of the prospective purchasers' ability to pay.

I remember hearing a business man who was always very emphatic in his assertion that there was no place for sentiment in business, advance as a reason for the declaration of a high rate of dividend the fact that his son was at an expensive school. Those who are so insistent about the necessity for resisting the intrusion of sentiment into business usually mean those kindly considerations affecting others.

In every-day life the human affections play a vital part in all business. The industrial confusion of to-day is largely due to the neglect of this very obvious truth. The great school of economists who hold the view that sentiment of the decent kind has no part in their science, are responsible for most of the industrial unrest.

If it is thought that I have exaggerated the element of human affection in business, I suggest that the life of a commercial traveller is a simple demonstration of the truth of the assertion that such affection moulds and directs the greater part of commercial activity. The commercial traveller knows that every conceivable human factor influences his daily activities. He knows that the sale of the most suitable and scientifically made goods, costed by experts, and designed by artists, can be rendered difficult and in many cases impossible by the operation of human affection, sentiment, and prejudice. Further, vast volumes of business flow into particular channels through the operation of mental idleness, habit, or a sense of loyalty to the supplier or his representative. Men will continue to deal with an inefficient firm because it is too much trouble to change, or because they like and are accustomed to its representative. This state of things constitutes the first fence that so often brings the young enthusiast and theoretical sales manager down.

The business man, like the politician, has to deal with men as they are, not as he may think they should be. The soldier is aware of the importance of *morale*, and works to create it. The wise man of commerce takes the same thing into consideration. He knows that if he can create the right atmosphere among his employees and those he deals with, he can get many things done that he could not accomplish by merely paying increased wages on the one hand, and increasing his advertising expenditure on the other. The payment of increased wages alone will never settle industrial unrest. Strikes settled by the payment of higher wages are usually only settled temporarily. Anyone who has ever been in charge of a factory knows that high wages can run side by side with all manner of friction, bad temper, and inferior work. They will know that a workman will leave a good job—in the monetary sense—for one where the pay is perhaps lower, if for some reason he thinks he will be more comfortable.

During the War I found it quite a common thing in the Army for men to refuse promotion because they did not wish to be separated from their pals, or because they disliked the idea of soldiering in a new and strange company. The same thing is encountered in commerce, where it is often very difficult to find a candidate for a more responsible and better-paid job. I recall a case where the forewoman of a workroom was very puzzled when one of her best hands gave in her notice. In doing so she stated that she was going to work for a rival firm under a foreman known and disliked intensely by her. All efforts to find out from the departing girl any reason connected with her working conditions responsible for the change failed to disclose any grievance. It was subsequently discovered that the girl had made the wholly detrimental change in order to be working nearer to her fiancé. Cases such as this could be multiplied indefinitely to confound the economist and distract the mathematician struggling to run a factory by formula.

The average Englishman likes to be regarded as a hard, practical creature, free from sentiment, conducting the business of life in the cool atmosphere of pure reason. He therefore invents phrases which he repeats in order to help him keep this illusion intact and which serve a further purpose of stilling the voice of his very active conscience when he does something the morality of which he doubts. The story of the grocer who called to his assistant: "If you have damped the tobacco and sanded the sugar, John, you may come up to prayers," is an example of this mental process. The prayers are intended to cancel out the doubtful expedients employed to increase the profits.

Economics may dictate the dismissal of Jones, but his employer, being English, finds some difficulty in thinking in purely economic terms. Perhaps he takes refuge in sending Jones his notice by post. If the unpleasant job has to be done personally, then some happy phrase must be invented to act as a sugar coating for the pill, and placate the inner voice that reminds the employer that Jones has a wife and family. This voice suggests that Jones' wife and family will scarcely appreciate the economic character of the dismissal except in so far as it disturbs the economic system of the Jones' household.

If there is no sentiment in business why this embarrassment over the dismissal of a few employees? Why this coughing and stuttering at the commencement of an interview that is to end in someone being deprived of a job? It is certain that if all those employed to-day for whom no economic justification can be found were to be dismissed the number of the unemployed would reach an alarming figure. In the commercial, as in the other activities of life, men like the things they are used to. It requires a mental effort to commence to do business with a stranger. He has to be told so much before the right footing is arrived at. If he has a new method to explain then it involves the effort of trying to understand it. If he has new goods to

sell their use may mean the complete reorganization of the office or works, or the task of getting the workpeople accustomed to a strange material, with all the usual resistance associated with change.

Every salesman knows that his customer will keep orders back to give to another salesman whom he considers his old friend. He is therefore aware of the importance of being the 'friend' for whom the largest share of business is reserved. If the goods of the world were bought on their merits and nothing but their merits then commercial travellers would almost cease to exist. It is possible to call regularly on a potential customer for years without being given an opportunity to display a sample, or even obtain an interview. Loyalty to persons is a factor in business that no commercial man can ignore. It is a force that frequently makes it a long and tedious task to build up a new business even though armed with the most desirable merchandise and backed by an efficient organization. Even those whose boast it is that they buy in the cheapest market are frequently deceived by the very sentiment they express with such pride. Who can say in these days of wide and fierce competition where the cheapest market is to be found? Who has the requisite technical knowledge to state with any degree of accuracy that the goods he buys are the cheapest, or even the lowest in price. He relies on someone to help his judgment, someone who has gained his confidence in this matter with or without real justification.

Confidence, Reputation, Goodwill, here in the long run, is the thing that matters most in all business. Goodwill, the term that accountants use in the balance sheet, which is the confidence of others in a business ; the reputation someone has made for himself based on the personality of the man or men who direct the concern. A matter of sentiment, rationalized sentiment, if it seems a more business-like term. The accountant, the man of figures, admits the word 'goodwill' in the balance sheet of a business, and gives it a money

value, including it among the assets. Among the material assets and liabilities listed in the prosaic piece of paper that assesses the value of a commercial undertaking the word Goodwill stands out as a symbol of the immaterial, the imponderable things of life that affect men in all their relations, whether commercial or otherwise. Nor can the seemingly material items of the balance sheet be truly valued without reference to the human element bound up with them. Book debts reckoned good because of the confidence that is felt towards the debtors; 'less doubtful debts,' or amounts owing by those who lack 'goodwill' towards whom a sentiment other than that of confidence is felt. Stock on hand 'as valued by the directors' the qualifying phrase used by the auditors to protect themselves against the sometimes too human weakness of directors.

When making money took precedence over making things then sentiment was squeezed out of industry. There was little room for the human affections in the Industrial Revolution and men got busy inventing plausible reasons for the ghastly result of this unnatural divorce. They dignified their reason by the name of science and that 'happy' phrase business is business was coined. Thus Socialism was born out of *business is business* by the *economic man*.

CHAPTER IX

SELLING

THE passing of every day finds the manufacturer more and more occupied by the problem of increasing or maintaining his sales. This problem not only occupies that portion of his time which in the past was normally devoted to the selling end of his business, but colours in an increasing degree his thoughts on what to make, and how to get it sold.

The modern necessity for so much attention to the art or trick of selling has curious results. In the days gone by the balance of time spent in the problem of making and selling generally tipped in favour of making. Manufacturers were makers first and foremost, the selling side of their business being considered of secondary importance.

There were fixed channels through which sales were effected and more or less fixed times when they were made. In many cases the functions of factory management and sales management were divided between two partners in the business. In large concerns men were engaged as salesmen and devoted their whole time to that task.

I have referred previously to the conventions that existed in most trades in days gone by. These conventions were rigid and rarely varied, with the result that the manufacturer came to regard himself quite definitely as a person whose job it was to make things, leaving the selling to someone else, or perhaps devoting only a very small portion of his time interviewing buyers and fixing up his orders which were usually of sufficient bulk to keep the

factory going for several months. With the newer practice of skipping the middleman, or merchant, and selling direct to the retail, this old system quite naturally became impossible and manufacturers were compelled to take the technique of selling much more seriously.

This is probably one of the first new factors that was instrumental in pushing the sales department into the forefront of the newer manufacturing concerns. As commerce speeded up and became a more common and popular way of making a living, competition increased and it became necessary to devote still more time and thought to marketing the factory's output. As a result the advertising man appeared on the scene. He devoted the whole of his time to the study of the different methods of commercial publicity, offering his service to the manufacturer as an expert in the presentation and sale of merchandise. The first of the new sales-managers soon made a place for themselves, and as their functions became generally recognized so their importance and salaries grew.

In their turn the advertising agents grew in importance and many of the pioneers of this profession amassed fortunes. During this development in the commercial world a great change was taking place, a change affecting the whole commercial outlook in a number of vital ways not generally realized even to-day.

In the past trade was leisurely, men made what was wanted, saturation point was often in view and producers were usually conscious of its existence. There was, roughly speaking, a limit to the spending power of the public. The business houses of those days neither expected nor arranged for a rapid expansion. Businesses were built up slowly, carefully, with deep foundations. Conditions made it necessary to be patient, to face considerable personal sacrifices, to exercise thrift in order to build a business. The limited liability company was unknown and capital hard to come by. The great difference between the past and

the present in commerce seems to be in the basic attitude of mind of those engaged in it.

In the past things were made as demand came into being. To-day things are first made and then a demand created through the medium of the new selling machinery. The modern advertising expert claims to be able to create a demand for any fairly reasonable thing anyone chooses to make. To a great extent this is true. This state of things has opened the commercial door to an entirely new type of man. Anyone wishing to have a gamble can float a company to finance the manufacture of any kind of gadget, engage the expert salesmen and put it on the market with some chance of getting away with a fortune. If the fortune does not materialize, at least he may draw a salary until such time as his venture is wound up. This sort of business, which is merely the modern edition on a large scale of the gentleman selling pills, etc., in the local market-place, is unhealthy, and is a menace to a large section of legitimate trading.

The introduction of an excessive gambling element into commerce makes for insecurity with the inevitable reaction on the stability of employment. There seems to be no doubt that modern advertising methods play into the hands of irresponsible traders bent on making a quick fortune, no matter what the cost to the social structure in which they operate. It is possible, for instance, for a company floated on these lines to market a new, but quite unwanted, shoe. A vast amount of capital is subscribed for the purpose and all the now well-known procedure takes place. A huge advertising appropriation is set aside, the sales manager collects together his staff and the market is attacked on the most approved American methods.

These combined efforts result in a turnover large enough to have a serious effect on the shoe market but not large enough, perhaps, to ensure a profit for the company concerned; weight of capital and intensity of effort may or may not put such a company on a paying basis. Price cutting

may keep the concern going for a number of years, but during the whole time the company is operating the effect is to lower the market price so that the serious part of the trade finds it extremely difficult to make a profit.

After a period of trading which tends to dislocate the whole trade, the company reduces its capital or is wound up, and the modern pirates set off for pastures new to repeat the process to the detriment of another trade. This kind of business, supported, in fact made possible by the national advertising, designed to force the hand of the retail, keeps the shopkeeper on the jump first from one thing then to another.

In his effort to supply the ever-increasing number of articles advertised in this way, he finds himself partially stocked with a variety of goods, but unable to supply any of them efficiently. The retailers' service quite naturally suffers and he is forced to lean on the manufacturer for his stock, which increases the difficulties and responsibilities of the latter.

The modern commercial weapon, national advertising, needs control. I would suggest in the first place that advertising is taxed in such a manner that the big advertisers pay a higher rate than the small man. Foreign firms advertising in this country could pay a still higher tax. The revenue would benefit the State and the public would also gain, though they might have to pay a little more for their newspapers, which might be an advantage. If the newspapers had to depend less on their advertising revenue the result might be an improvement in the matter with which the popular papers regale the public every morning.

Having spent most of my life in directing the advertising of the company with which I am connected I think I am familiar with most of the arguments in favour of unrestricted advertising that would be rallied against any suggestion for future control or taxation. The professions manage to carry on efficiently without the aid of huge

advertising expenditure; moreover, wholesome competition exists amongst professional men which ensures public service of a very high order.

If big scale advertising were to be eliminated the retailer would have to equip himself with the necessary technical knowledge of his wares to sell them intelligently and efficiently. In the days gone by, when the craftsman was his own salesman, the public could be sure of authentic information about its purchases. To-day the average assistant in a store knows little or nothing about the goods he sells and usually thinks of little else to say other than a dreary harping on the price.

Those who believe in the complete control of industry by the State may find in these criticisms of our modern methods arguments in favour of this belief. I fear that were the State to take over, then salesmanship would drop to the level of the Post Office, with the minimum of civility one usually associates with the purchase of a postal order or stamp. Under these circumstances such expressions as 'Shall I send it up, madam,' or 'If you don't like it we shall be pleased to change it,' would fall into disuse. International salesmanship conducted on these lines would lead to a staggering drop in exports, though the people at home might be induced to put up with the 'Take it or leave it' attitude of the government official.

There is a medium between the State control and the present anarchy of selling. Methods of selling employed by many modern concerns approximate closely to those of the 'three card trick' man in the race train. All those tricks dignified by the name of salesmanship, designed to keep the consumer in constant debt to the selling company, are unmoral and altogether indefensible. Others less reprehensible are vulgar and smack of the ways of the common cheat. It may be argued that if the public are stupid enough to be taken in by these tricks they have only themselves to blame and they will at least learn by experience. These

methods uncontrolled are capable of more harm to the people than merely that of causing them to pay for their gullibility. Business built up by trickery and cheating is liable to slump at any time, when the potency of the latest dodge weakens. The slumps that arise through the inherent artificiality in the trade affected cannot be countered by the action of economists or governments. They are the South Sea Bubbles that defeat all authority and form a constant social irritant that creates the seed-bed for unrest.

I do not believe that the general public have any idea of the chaotic state of commerce due to the growing frenzy—no milder word will do—of competitive selling. Only a modern commercial traveller will appreciate the humour of the remark made to me by a lady when discussing business : “ Why don’t you *tell* Messrs. So and So (naming a well-known London store) to sell your goods ? ” she asked.

The result of this frenzied selling is that the selling costs rise steadily year by year, and this in spite of modern methods of transport, telephones, and other facilities peculiar to this age. In the past there was a common-sense sequence of movement from the producer to the public and goods generally followed the accepted route of producer-merchant-retail-public. The function of each was defined with the result that each was a specialist in his own part of the movement of goods. Efforts to short-circuit this conventional procedure has resulted in a state of confusion that has certainly not made for improved service.

To-day some manufacturers own their own shops, others trade through the wholesale. Large stores in search of higher profits seek out those manufacturers with whom they may deal direct, whilst wholesale merchants start factories of their own. Machine builders, making machines with which to produce cloth, also make the cloth and sell it in competition with those to whom they hope to sell their

machines. Merchants describe themselves as manufacturers and vice versa, whilst the big stores engage in every conceivable activity and the result, in many cases, is Jack of all trades and master of none. This confusion has been growing fast for some years, and I believe it to be detrimental to the whole commercial system. Associations of manufacturers, merchants and retailers strive to bring some discipline into their various trades, but having no real authority behind them to enforce their regulations, their efforts are defeated by unscrupulous members or by those who remain outside their corporations. The modern industrialist might do well to examine the old Guild system, which though abused did enforce some sort of discipline amongst the members of the many crafts it regulated. This ordering of trade is a difficult problem, but I think that there are many serious men engaged in commerce to-day who feel the necessity of more discipline and who would welcome any efforts on the part of the Government to infuse some order and sense of responsibility into the state of commercial chaos that exists to-day.

Many of the so-called modern advantages need careful examination. It is so easy to accept and hand on plausible claims for new usages, without challenge, and by so doing deceive oneself that all is well because one is acting on the very latest ideas. One hears so much these days of the Service that modern business has to offer to the public. In many cases this service is little more than a new form of bluff. I remember the time when it was the custom to send for the village bootmaker when requiring a new pair of boots. This old-fashioned craftsman would call at the house and measure one for one's boots. As a boy this visit of the local 'hand-sewn man' used to fascinate me. I would watch my father sitting comfortably in his chair whilst the measuring process took place. This was done by means of strips of paper on which the bootmaker would tear to mark the measurements. These little tears in paper

strips were afterwards marked with mysterious signs in pencil. During the operations my father would discuss the various merits of different kinds of leather, the width of welt, thickness of sole with the bootmaker. No professional sales talk entered into the matter. The bootmaker, being a practical man and the actual maker of the boots he was selling, knew all there was to know about the subject. His advice was of value because it was real. The kind of boots to be made having been settled between the buyer and seller, they were delivered in due course to the house. On looking back it seems to me that this method, now considered old fashioned, did indeed represent service. There was no bluff in the transaction and my father not only had a bootmaker and his skill at his disposal, but the advice of an expert who had a personal knowledge of the number and kind of pairs of boots my father possessed, together with the kind of use they were to be put to. Under modern conditions this very direct and practical method of buying boots is replaced by a lengthy procedure something on the following lines.

I set off for the store, an elaborate and ornate building divided into a number of departments and covering a considerable area of valuable ground. It will be noticed that it is necessary to go to this store, it does not come to me. A very fine-looking man, wearing a smart tunic glittering with medals, guides me through the impressive portals. Inside, a gentleman, in morning coat and the latest thing in striped trousers, welcomes me with a bow and asks me my pleasure. I explain that I require some thick boots suitable for walking. He listens to my little story with deference and then asks me to follow him, which means a walk of some distance until he eventually bows me into a lift. A very smart girl or boy in the lift asks me very nicely which floor I wish to visit. I again tell my boot story in an abbreviated form and up goes the electric lift, causing

an unpleasant feeling of sickness as it stops at the required floor. The gates roll back and I slip out into another expensively fitted room where I am met by another well-dressed gentleman who again asks me my pleasure. I again repeat my boot story, this time at greater length because I feel I am nearing the spot where boots change hands. He listens attentively, and at the conclusion of my story, about which I am now beginning to feel rather self-conscious, he asks me to follow him and again I set off with escort to the secret place where boots are sold. At last I arrive in that part of the store known as the boot department, and my new guide introduces me to another and probably younger man—not quite so well dressed, but quite kindly and courteous. I again tell my story, this time with considerable detail and dramatic effect. The young man waves me to a seat and proceeds to produce boots of all kinds except the kind I want. I explain that the boots I require are much heavier than those with which I am slowly being buried. The young man listens quite sympathetically, but there has crept into his manner a tinge of patronage. He explains that the kind of boot that I require is not now worn. The *best* people, he informs me very kindly, are wearing boots quite different from the ones I want. Relations are now becoming rather strained. I feel that it is up to me to make a stand for my own idea of what I want. Though I enter into some detail of the reason why I have such queer ideas about boots and talk eloquently about my life in the country, the long walks in muddy lanes, and over wet grass, all the time gathering evidence to strengthen my case for the need of thick boots, the sometime salesman, now my opponent, remains adamant. He repeats courteously but firmly that there is no demand for such boots. He is willing to admit that he has heard of such boots, that they were sold in the time of his predecessor, at least there are legends to that effect that are still spoken of by some of the older

members of the staff. Now, however, things have changed and people wear the kind of boots that he is displaying.

What started as a simple shopping expedition has now developed into a debate. I represent the conservative element of society, whilst the salesman represents the government for the time being in power, the progressive party.

I am conscious that I am losing ground. It is probable that the salesman knows nothing about the manufacture of boots. He is quite unable to give any useful advice in the matter. He, however, has the advantage of being the man in possession. He stands on his own ground with reserves of assistants, departmental managers, etc., ready to support him in his final assault. The whole building is designed to weaken my resistance, to obliterate my personality, to reduce me to the status of a potential consumer. I am pitting my personal desires against one who is part of a vast system, and it is probable that the salesman derives strength and determination from the fact that the merchandise man told him an hour or so before my visit that his stock was too large. The order has gone forth, 'Stocks must be reduced or ——' The normal salesman values his job more than my ideas about the kind of boots I want to wear. I give way and buy the boots the salesman wants to sell. "Could you send them for me?" I ask lamely. "Why yes, of course, sir; we deliver within a radius of fifty miles." There is a snag in this however. It appears that the smart motor delivery van only visits my area every Wednesday and I needed the boots at once. It does not matter, I know I shall not wear them because they are not at all what I needed. I find my way back to the street down the long corridors, through the ladies' underwear department, turn left, no, right, where the devil am I? "The way out, sir?" asks a well-dressed gentleman appearing from nowhere apparently. "Yes, please," I murmur. "This way, sir." I follow him

and the lift-boy enquires : “ Downstairs, sir ? ” “ Going down.” There seems a great deal of fuss and expense involved in supplying me with something I do not want. Possibly this explains why the slogan most used in commerce to-day is ‘*Service.*’

CHAPTER X

TRADE SLUMPS

THE greater part of the modern commercial activity is based on human needs that are artificial. For this reason good and bad trade depends largely on the attitude of the mind of society as a whole. Man's fundamental economic needs are simple. They consist of food and warmth. That is to say he wants regular meals and clothing to protect him against the vagaries of the climate in which he lives. He does not, however, need elaborate clothing nor cleverly planned dinners of many courses. When I divide my personal wants into the things I must have in order to live, and the things I think I ought to have in order to put up a satisfactory show in the social circles in which I move, there is a great difference.

I discover that most of my purchases are quite unnecessary for the purpose of keeping alive and well in health. I do not really need half my wardrobe. My motor car is a useful luxury and my house is full of quite useless furniture and knick-knacks. I could therefore live on a fraction of my income. Most of the things I buy are dictated by custom, snobbery, and an unanalysed idea that I must or ought to have them. If, however, I suddenly decided to live the simple life my purchases would drop to a fraction of their present standard. If a million men were to take the same action at the same time then there would be a slump in trade, a commercial crisis. It will be seen that under modern conditions any general change in the attitude of men's minds may be the cause of a trade slump. And this

quite irrespective of an alteration in the state of the individual's financial position. Thus a religious revival, a new philosophy or circumstances promoting widespread fear or apprehension, may cause a sudden and devastating setback to trade. These considerations apply to trade in general. There are many additional ones that affect particular trades, such as change of fashion, new customs, or the development of a new industry which may take place at the expense of older ones.

Of recent years the motor car has become an added social necessity, together with the wireless receiving sets now found in every home. Again it has become the fashion to own the house we live in, as a consequence there has been an amazing boom in activities of building societies. The new trades built up on these needs have been largely developed at the expense of many of the older ones. When people come to think that it is more important to own a motor car than it is to appear expensively dressed, quite obviously the dress trade will suffer. A motor car is an expensive item and for many people it is necessary to economise expenditure in other directions in order to possess one. Thus the prosperity of the motor trade depends largely on the slump created in others. The economist may be able to counter this see-saw tendency in trade by increasing the purchasing power of the public in order that it may indulge its desire for both motor cars and elaborate dress. If, however, for some obscure reason it becomes 'bad form' to be seen in a large motor car the problem will become even more difficult to solve. If society should decide to ride in public conveyances though possessed of ample means with which to buy private cars then the economist is defeated.

The problem passes into another sphere. It becomes one that can only be solved by those mysterious forces that together mould public opinion. Modern commercial men have been conscious of the disturbing effect on trade of

public opinion. They have tried to create their own kind of public opinion through the medium of national advertising. The newspapers and periodicals are full of the advertisements of those who hope to influence the desires and habits of men and women to their own advantage. These efforts are in many cases successful but their success depends on the absence of any greater influence reaching the public from other sources. Men may respond freely to the suggestions of advertisers until the fear of war or revolution galvanises their resistance to such appeals and starts them off saving their money against an uncertain future. Thus the very newspapers that carry expensive advertisements designed to create good trade may at the same time spread the news that will cancel out their effect. It is difficult to see how modern commerce so delicate, so artificial, can be made less susceptible to recurring slumps.

Under modern conditions good trade is almost entirely a matter of confidence. This confidence may be shaken or destroyed by so many forces outside the scope of economics, or by circumstances that the commercial man is quite unable to influence or control. In many parts of the world efforts are being made to safeguard industry from international disturbance by means of national self-sufficiency. Assuming that these efforts have a measure of success there is still the problem of insuring the stability of the internal trade.

It seems that the proper settlement of the land offers the best hope of commercial stability. Man approaches near to economic independence on the land. Here at least he is dealing in fundamentals. So long as he is prepared to live on the land as opposed to trying to make wealth for himself from it he is as secure as he is ever likely to be in this uncertain world. The country therefore that has the greatest number of its people living on the land is the one that is the least susceptible to the devastating effects of widespread trade slumps.

The drift back to the land must, however, be a natural

one. It will probably come about when men realize that easy fortunes can no longer be made in industry. The land does not offer men a fortune but it gives them something of vital importance that industry cannot give and that is security from starvation. It is easy to face a period of bad trade so long as it does not involve an empty stomach. A nation of men able to feed themselves and their families even though it be with very simple diet can face a slump with equanimity. A besieged garrison may have to put up with a great deal of personal inconvenience and restriction of liberty but so long as there is food it can sit tight indefinitely. So long as men have to put their hand into their pocket in order to buy every ounce of food they eat they are dependent creatures. They must in such circumstances be at the mercy of forces which they cannot control. The State may plan and re-plan to ensure the proper supply of food for the industrial workers. And the more such plans rest in the hands of a central authority the greater the danger of a catastrophe. The efficiency of an all-powerful central authority rests on the assumption that it includes the best brains available. There is, however, no existing machinery to insure such an ideal state of things. It is possible that the men best equipped to occupy such an onerous position are to be found amongst those least likely to have the characteristics which enable them to force themselves into the centre of the stage.

Assuming that there exists a central body capable of planning industry in such a way as to eliminate the chance of serious trade slumps, it can only operate if backed by some form of compulsion. It is useless to plan for a nation that is allowed to choose whether or not it will fit in with the arrangement. Thus the more comprehensive its plan the greater the loss of freedom for the individual. During the last year or so it has become the custom for women to discard their stockings during the summer months. This fashion though a saving in money and added

comfort to the individual is a serious menace to the stocking trade. Women engaged in the stocking trade discarded their stockings together with the rest. So little do individuals relate their actions to the simple economic laws that this curious state of things called for no comment, even amongst those who depended on the prosperity of the hosiery trade for their living. Had the Government been planning for the ladies' hosiery trade they would have to take a note of a fashion that was nullifying their efforts to keep the trade prosperous. It is probable that the wearing of stockings would have been made compulsory, or alternatively money would be spent on propaganda designed to make women aware of the commercial consequences of their action. It seems that we must choose between freedom of action and trade slumps, or loss of liberty and a measure of stability.

In this respect the dictator countries have an advantage. We do not, however, want to live under a dictator nor do we want to suffer from the ever-recurring trade depressions. We cannot have our cake and eat it. There is a price that must always be paid for freedom. If we are not prepared to pay it then there remains the alternative of Government control with the attendant loss of liberty. Nor is it at all certain that the dictator will be able to counteract the mysterious forces that determine human conduct. He may succeed for a time to direct them but in the long run he will be defeated. It is possible to have a slump in dictators. A change of public opinion on a large enough scale will ensure such a slump.

Another factor that renders trade liable to depression difficult to deal with is over specialization. For the most part, the distressed areas are specialized districts. When there are large areas devoted to a particular trade and peopled by men or women trained to look in one direction for a living, there is obviously a danger of distress should anything happen to upset the trade concerned. Such

distress is so widespread that the problem of relieving it becomes a superhuman task. In the past it was common for people to divide their time between work on the land and industry. Men so occupied had two strings to their bow and were more versatile in their training and outlook. The modern industrialist might argue that they were inefficient because their time was divided between several occupations. But as I have said before, efficiency is not all that matters. Are we quite certain that these workers of the past were inefficient? If in the pursuit of efficiency in one direction it is necessary to risk making trade susceptible to incurable slumps then it seems desirable to investigate this problem very carefully. It may be that we are passing through a time of transition from the semi to the complete machine age when labour as it is now understood will be completely eliminated. When a few technicians will produce the necessities of life and mankind will be released from hewing wood and drawing water and occupied in the pursuit of the luxuries of the mind. In such a world the authority that material wealth now confers will disappear and our present values will be re-assessed. This, however, will be no classless society so often promised us by our modern Socialists, but one of a countless number of classes differentiated by an infinite variety of spiritual awareness. In such a kingdom there will indeed be many mansions housing inequalities as yet undreamt of.

PART THREE

A MANUFACTURER AMONG THE
POLITICIANS

CHAPTER I

FIRST BEGINNINGS

THERE is a curious convention in this country which in effect suggests that it is undesirable for people in certain professions to take an active part in politics. This convention also obtains in commerce where many employers consider it quite improper to identify themselves openly with any particular party. Political agents are usually all too aware of this convention and find their work hampered by it in many directions. Tradesmen seem to think that by openly attaching themselves to a political organization they may prejudice their business. It is obvious why it should be necessary for men in the fighting services and the police to keep clear of party politics whilst they remain on the active list. But for anyone else such an attitude if pushed far enough makes the democratic form of government absurd. It is difficult to see why an employer of labour should be expected to have no definite political views when he knows that his works contain many active and avowed Socialists or Communists. With a factory well staffed by Socialist shop stewards daily preaching their views to their fellow-workers it is surely quite right that the employer should have an equal right to express his views within his works or outside. My father had no qualms in this direction and never hesitated to express his political views either inside or outside his factory. Nor did he take any exception to any of his work-people expressing other opinions.

I was, therefore, brought up in an atmosphere where

politics formed a normal part of conversation in and out of business. It was natural, therefore, that I should have an interest in the political questions of the hour. It was not, however, until some years after the War that I took any active part in politics. In the first place the ordinary routine of business occupied so much time and thought that there was little energy to spare for public work. Moreover, I never found until middle-age any desire on the part of the local political organizations to seek support from anyone outside the small coterie concerned with the political associations operating in the district. I have subsequently discovered that it is a characteristic of those in charge of the Conservative faith to overlook youth in their search of support; though in this regard things have improved in recent years.

I well remember the first approach from the local political association which took the form of a personal call from a retired seaman who had been employed to whip round the division in search of new support. This very pleasant gentleman suggested that I should take the initiative in forming a branch of the Divisional Association in the village in which I lived. I pointed out to him that there were those dwelling in the neighbourhood of more importance than myself who had lived in the district more years than I and whose social position was greater than mine. I provided him with their names and addresses and promised that should they refuse to assist him I would do what I could to get something going in the village. He departed, apparently grateful for the information, promising to return and report after making the necessary calls. He soon reappeared at my house with a doleful tale of failure to interest anyone in the neighbourhood in the proposition that he had put to me. Thus I drifted into the instructive and interesting world of politics. We founded our village branch and from this beginning I found myself getting deeper and deeper into political activity.

I knew nothing of political machinery. I had attended political meetings, criticized the chairman and speakers, secretly envied them when they were good and openly derided them when they were bad. I had yet to find out that it is a great deal easier to criticize a speaker than it is to make a speech. I had yet to experience the humiliation of standing on a platform in front of a room full of people with an utterly blank mind, wildly beating the air for a simple idea that refused to materialize, and all the time faced with the prospect of having to sit down in total disorder, leaving a speech unfinished for the amusement of a room full of strangers.

Anxious as I was to help the cause to which I had attached myself, I quickly realized that some severe training was necessary. I soon discovered how true were the words of Bolingbroke when he said: "Look about you, and you will see men eager to speak, and keen to act, when particular occasions press them, or particular motives excite them, but quite unprepared for either: and hence all that superficiality in speaking, for want of information."

Where was I to get the necessary information and the training required to use it? There were political schools and local courses in various subjects organized by the Divisional Association. I attended a short course held for potential public speakers. This was an instructive and trying ordeal. It is now some years ago and yet I remember a great deal of the wisdom born of practice that the instructor imparted to us. "Remember, gentlemen," he said at the end of his last lecture on public speaking, "there will be many failures." How many times have I said to myself when sitting down after addressing a meeting: "And this is one of them." He was a wise old gentleman. We thought him somewhat old-fashioned as we listened to his lectures, but subsequent experience has taught me that he knew his subject, and that he well knew of troubles and trials ahead of us of which we were happily then unconscious.

A few short courses, however, seemed to me entirely inadequate if I was to become of any real use to the Party I had now joined as an active member. The more one did and the more one thought about the political subjects under review the more obvious and oppressive one's ignorance seemed. The work was increasing month by month and the necessity for further training became more and more pressing. During the early part of my new political activities I had the good fortune to come in contact with an exceptional agent. He possessed that gift, in common with my costing chief at the War Office, of making me do all those alarming things of which I considered myself quite incapable. He was a brilliant organizer and had a 'way' with men, learnt in the Army where he had had an exceptionally varied career. He it was who induced me to first tackle addressing out of door meetings, and it was due to his art of persuasion that I was prevailed upon to attend a large meeting of our opponents during election time to ask the candidate questions which I knew would make me both conspicuous and unpopular. He took me step by step through a number of varied and, at times, embarrassing duties that are the common lot of the political worker. It always sounded so easy and natural when he propounded the little job he would say he was 'quite certain' I should do for him.

The rough and tumble of political work is an excellent education for any man or woman, and like all other human activities is not without its humorous side. During one election in which I took my humble part I was sent to speak in an isolated village school. On arriving there I found the room packed with an expectant electorate, an agitated sub-agent at the door who informed me that the chairman was missing. I suggested that we might elect a chairman from the body of the hall and so ensure keeping to the strict time-table laid down by our very efficient and soldierly agent. This I was told was quite out of the question. The missing chairman was a local man of importance who,

should he turn up in due course to find a stranger in the chair, might be annoyed and possibly offended beyond reconciliation. "Where does he live?" I said, becoming agitated myself, for I was new to the job and not at all sure of my ability to make a sensible speech. "In the next village," said the sub-agent. "Very well," I replied, "let us go and dig him out." Off we went to the chairman's home, leaving the audience to amuse itself. We found our chairman, who was very deaf and advanced in years, wandering in the garden quite oblivious of the fact that he was expected at the meeting. We hustled him into our car and set off for the schoolrooms, where with some difficulty we hoisted him on to the platform.

According to the programme I was to speak first, then the candidate was to arrive from a neighbouring village, and the meeting was to be wound up by a young lady speaker who arrived shortly after me. Feeling that the absence of the chairman, together with the resulting fuss of fetching him and the hope that the audience would stay the course during the necessary wait, had thoroughly rattled me, I thought it advisable to make some arrangement for a possible miss-fire on my part. "If I dry up," I explained to the young lady, "I will wink at you and I shall be deeply grateful if you will carry on with your speech until the candidate arrives."

This the lady agreed to do and I hustled on to the platform, where I found the chairman in a state of extreme agitation because in his haste he had forgotten his agenda. By this time I was quite desperate and explained none too politely that he would have to do without it as there was no time to return to his home for the lost papers.

The poor old man's deafness did not help matters and what was intended for a stage whisper on my part had to develop into a bellow that could be heard all over the room. Without his agenda I had to prompt him every few minutes, telling him when to stand up and when to sit down. Then

when at last he was on his legs looking like making a real start he turned to me and said : " Are you going to speak ? " " Yes," and I nodded violently. " What is your name ? " he asked. I discreetly whispered the information. However, I did not get it over until I had bawled it a number of times. By this time I was perspiring freely and my mind was in a whirl. I jumped to my feet, pushed him into his chair and started on my speech. I did about fifteen minutes in good order and then the effect of the evening's upset told its tale, and I paused, stumbled and realized the worst. I was about to dry up. I recall chattering about the unemployment problem, but could think of nothing to say about the unemployed except that they were without work, and then I went on to falter that men who were without work were unemployed, that is, had nothing to do.

There was nothing for it but to wink and call up my reserve, in the shape of the lady speaker. However, I was not yet out of the wood, for it was only when I came to use that essential wink that I realized that the room was nearly dark. No one had thought of lighting the lamps at the commencement of the meeting. Here, then, was one of the failures that our old teacher of elocution had spoken of so grimly. I was about to dry up, my last hope, due to careful arrangement of my part, was a wink which would not carry owing to the fading light. Wildly I plunged again into the question of unemployment, when to my relief I heard the candidate's car outside the school. Abandoning the unfortunate unemployed, I informed the meeting that as the candidate had arrived I was sure they would be glad to hear him without further delay. Whereupon I sat down, hot and unhappy, my eyes fixed on the door which was now hardly visible in the gathering gloom. The candidate entered, and in the semi-darkness tripped over a form, which was a signal for a noisy and enthusiastic welcome, whilst I set off from the platform to light the lamps and so repair the neglected duty that had brought me so nearly to disaster.

All political activity is not election work. Between fights the political machinery must be kept going and improved if elections are to be won. I do not think there are many people who can find much inspiration in the ordinary routine of a Divisional Association. So much of the business is purely repetition. The tendency seems to be to increase year by year this dull routine work, consisting of endless committees and councils all too much occupied with the details of organization to find room for education work of an inspiring kind. Good speakers are difficult to find, and what few there are seem to be crowded out of action by the mass of detail that seems to grow as the years go by.

The enormous increase in the electorate has made for detail and added to the routine work that political organizations have to deal with. It seemed to me that a great deal of the routine was out of touch with modern conditions. After all, machinery, though necessary, is not inspiring. It does not attract the ordinary man and woman, and in many cases repels the kind of people who might under some conditions become useful and enthusiastic political workers. I found the Party machine very dreary, and cast round for a new technique for arousing interest in politics.

CHAPTER II

ASHRIDGE

ABOUT this time the new Bonar Law College at Ashridge was opened. Its purpose was not to train Party workers but to educate ordinary men and women in the duties of citizenship. I read of it in the newspapers, and when someone suggested that I might try a course there, I thought seriously about it until one day I made up my mind to visit the College to see if there was within its walls the inspiration that was missing in the ordinary political routine. I entered myself for a fortnight's course, and when the day arrived on which it was to start, packed my bag, got into my car, and set off for Ashridge. It was a glorious June day when I pulled up at the College entrance, and I remember well thinking how stupid I was to commit myself for a fortnight of such weather to an institution of which I knew nothing and which might, for all I knew, be boring in the extreme. However, there I was, the deposit paid, and I could at least make the most of it and never return again if disappointed.

On leaving my car and entering the building my gloomy meditations were cut short by the arrival of a charming lady who immediately took charge of me, leading me through a maze of corridors and up endless steps, and depositing me in a large room. Having explained that my luggage would follow and that tea would be served in the great hall at 4.30, she departed, leaving me to examine my new quarters at my leisure. From the window of my room I could see the garden stretched out below map-wise, in the centre of

which a fountain was splashing lazily in the sunshine of a perfect June afternoon. At the end of the garden the view was cut off by a row of huge lime trees which appeared some hundred feet high, their tops swaying gently like the masts of ships at anchor in a harbour. Everything was very still in this lovely garden, and though my room was a considerable height from the ground I could hear the water falling back into the pool from the fountain in its centre.

I stood at the window for some time absorbing the beauty and peace of the scene below. 'Sweet waters, dimpling laugh from tap or spring,' were the lines that ran through my head. It was all so unexpected and I hesitated to leave my room to explore further, lest something should happen that would spoil this first impression. However, I could not spend a fortnight in this charming room gazing out of the window, so with some trepidation I opened the door, noting carefully the position of my room, and set out to find the great hall.

I discovered that my room opened on to a hall, some eighty feet high, ornamented with statues of knights and their ladies, monks and princes standing aloof in their niches coldly indifferent to the new use to which their abode had come. I had apparently arrived very early for I had this huge hall to myself and could wander around and examine it in detail. I found a notice board on which the syllabus of the course was attached, together with a number of rules posted for the guidance of the students. These I read with care, being fearful of 'dropping a brick.' The names of the lecturers conveyed nothing to me then, though later I was to find that some of them were to mean a great deal to me. There was also a dull, impersonal touch about the list of students who were to be my companions during the next two weeks. Later I was to discover friends among these meaningless names, friends I have since met many times and whom I hope to meet again at those reunions which are so unique and charming a feature of Ashridge.

Having exhausted the reading matter on the notice board, I wandered back into the main hall where I found I was no longer alone. Seated at the far end were two attractive girls. What was I to do? Not then being *au fait* with the happy conventions of the College I was at a loss for the correct technique. Was I to approach and introduce myself or should I wait until some official arrived to introduce me? Having an inborn fear of strangers, I sat down as far from my fellow-students as possible and thought the matter over. As I thought about it the position appeared more and more absurd. Here we were in this great hall, all apparently students—two of them quite outstandingly charming, at that—seated in cold isolation and pretending that we had none of us noticed the presence of the others. The more I wrestled with the situation the less chance there seemed of solving it with dignity. I had better take the initiative, I thought. ‘Do it now,’ as the American advertisements advise, or the native hue of resolution will indeed be sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought. Taking a deep breath I rose and approached the young ladies, and nervously introducing myself awaited the snub I felt I might be inviting.

It is in situations such as these that women assert their superiority over the clumsy sex. In a few moments I was put at my ease and we were laughing at the situation that had appeared so difficult a few seconds previously. My new acquaintances, it appeared, had come from Scotland. Having made a mistake in their arrangements, they had spent a week-end alone at Ashridge awaiting the commencement of the Course. As we chatted together the tea arrived, and with it a further batch of students, and the Course began to assume definite shape. Over the teacups things moved apace and the growing assembly took on itself the nature of a pleasant house party.

Thus began one of the happiest holidays that I have ever spent. There were about sixty students in the Course,

made up of people of all ages and many different types. In two or three days we all knew each other, and work and play ran smoothly together, gaining in interest as the days passed. All Ashridge students agree that there is no Course like their first one, which remains as something fascinating and clear in the mind because of its unexpectedness. I went to Ashridge thinking in terms of colleges and party politics. I returned home replete with memories of a happy house party at which one met new friends and acquaintances, and heard lecturers who were able to stimulate the mind and who by their sincerity and enthusiasm rekindled a desire to do something, in however a modest way, for England. When later I looked back at these first happy days spent in that historic mansion, where in days gone by Mary and Elizabeth Tudor spent part of their youth, I felt a sense of regret that one can only live certain happy hours once in a lifetime. There seems to be no encore for those acts on life's stage that touch something very deep in the heart. During the first visit to Ashridge, when one comes unexpectedly upon the Monk's Garden and explores the quiet avenues beneath the trees that have seen so much of English history, there is a charm never to be recaptured in quite the same way.

Those first June nights in the Italian garden with the moon riding high above the softly swaying limes, gossiping with new friends, discussing the contemporary political question, cannot be forgotten. I remember, too, meeting for the first time those men who walked with us after their lectures—Arthur Bryant, Hugh Sellon, Keith Fieling, who with others first inspired us to read for ourselves again, that we might learn more of the heritage we are so apt to take for granted without thought of its significance and worth. There was nothing dreary or dull about the politics at Ashridge. Patient and friendly lecturers answered our often elementary questions without a trace of patronage, and discussed any subject in the gardens, lounge,

or in the canteen over a tankard of beer. The spirit of Ashridge took hold of us. The 'General,' our genial Principal, guided us quietly in to disciplined paths, and the imperturbable secretary, genial and well-beloved Harry Gordon, answered innumerable silly questions without a sign in his manner that he had answered similar silly questions hundreds of times before. He cared for our comfort with the skill of the expert organiser demonstrating daily that the greatest art lies in the concealment of the art.

Days filled with study, tennis, swimming, debates, dancing, and laughter, passed all too quickly, and when the day to depart arrived we went our several ways somewhat sadly. I returned home full of enthusiasm for my new discovery, and forthwith set about trying to interest others in this new source of inspiration. The official mind was quite unresponsive, but then the Conservative official can often give the unchanging East a lesson in immutability. The unofficial person was polite but bored. If they were already members of a political organization they were usually quite satisfied that all that could possibly be done was being done. If they were not members of an organization they, of course, could not believe that anything even remotely associated with politics could be interesting. It is astonishing how few people there are who take any real interest in the way in which their country is governed. Perhaps it is as well that it is so. The democratic form of government is very difficult to operate even on the two 'party' basis. If it should happen that all and sundry earnestly desired to express their views, through their representatives in the House of Commons, the resulting confusions would perhaps defeat the system entirely. As things are the spread of education and consequent increasing interest in the affairs of the State adds daily to the complications of government. It is very difficult nowadays to find labels that truly describe the great political parties. Within each party there is such a divergence of opinions on such a

multitude of questions that it becomes essential for each of us to dig deep for basic principles on which we can agree in order to get anything done. If we are to stay by the way to argue out all the side issues that arise out of any political question, the end will indeed be mischievous madness, and the potential dictator will have his opportunity to jump into power.

I went to Ashridge in search of political education and found it. I do not mean that fourteen days spent at the College provides anyone with a complete political education. Ashridge does, however, put one in the way of such an education, and what is perhaps more important, supply the enthusiasm and the desire to be so educated. It seems that whatever we undertake in this world it is done with motives that are mixed. It was natural for me to interest myself in politics, but there were other motives that caused me to drift slowly into an active part. I had private reasons for seeking an outlet for my energy, and I was curious about this political life that seemed to supply an absorbing interest to many men and women. Just as I joined the Army with preconceived ideas about the make-up of a soldier, so I drifted into the political world—or more accurately, the fringe of it, with pre-conceived ideas about politicians. In both cases my ideas were in the main wrong.

There is, after all, no education like experience. It may be painful, but pain acts as a fixative, and things learnt through unpleasant and perhaps humiliating experience have reality and significance that is lacking in text-books. There is all the difference between knowing something and realizing it. I suppose I had the usual unflattering picture of the politicians that is common to business men—a picture that is handed on from one generation to another, regardless of ever-changing circumstances that modify all things.

The Englishman's passion for labels often leads him astray. He parts with these labels, frequently very old and

torn, with the greatest reluctance, though they have long ceased to describe the goods to which they are attached, yet he reads them carefully and acts on the assumption that they are entirely accurate and complete. Politicians, I had been given to understand, were self-seeking, aggressive, and unscrupulous men, practised in the art of sitting on fences. I found them much as other men—a mixed lot with the virtues and vices common to other professions. On the whole perhaps they were broader-minded than many of their fellows. Even a superficial knowledge of the affairs of a modern state require considerable study. Moreover, politicians conduct their business in the limelight. They are out in the open to be shot at by all and sundry, and have, therefore, to stand up to constant and varied criticism from all kinds of men ; some far more informed than themselves, others less so. I found that they generally exhibited a very considerable degree of courage, though on the debit side many of them seemed as jealous of each other as chorus girls are supposed to be. I was certainly amazed to discover that many well-known men accustomed to public speaking exhibited all the symptoms of extreme nervousness usually associated with untried amateurs. I was later to notice that the best speakers were the most nervous.

I am inclined to think that the politician is quite wrongly accused in the main of being a trimmer. He has at some period in his career to haul up a flag of one sort or another. It is the man who assumes an attitude of superiority to the politician who is usually sitting on the fence. He frequently flies no flag. He it is who takes refuge in the secrecy of the ballot, and endeavours to camouflage his inability to make up his mind by stating that he is ' no party man ' but intends to vote for the best man, regardless of party. It is a curious attitude to take up, susceptible of peculiar results. Mr. A. may represent the political party professing principles to which one subscribes, but Mr. B. is demonstrably the better man, abler and more efficient let us assume. Therefore,

one votes for him, and through him for the political principle with which one may totally disagree.

The politician's life is public all the time, and he can always be called to account in a democratic country. He has many masters whose wishes are often difficult, if not impossible to reconcile. The business-man, on the other hand, can remain behind the scenes if he so wishes, and need explain his actions to no one so long as he is successful enough to make some sort of a profit. The business-man must, however, deliver the goods, and that at frequent intervals, whilst the politician can 'renew his bills' quite a number of times if he can handle his public cleverly. We should all of us be kinder and more charitable if we lived under a system of general post, where we took it in turns changing places and doing each other's job for a while. Every time I have had the good fortune to be able to leave my own work and take up that of another kind, I have had it impressed upon me that it is easier to criticise the other fellow than it is to do his job.

If those modern ladies and gentlemen so busy writing Left Wing novels, and who write so well, would give their fountain-pens a rest and change jobs with the people they criticise, their new books would be much more interesting. Those of them who are at present unable to make up their minds whether it is the employer of labour or modern statesmen (of the Right of course) who is best qualified for the honour of the position of Public Enemy Number One might find enlightenment by taking a hand at these 'simple' jobs. I have always admired a good speaker, but the naturally fluent speaker is improved by a practical knowledge of his subject. I have likewise had, as long as I can remember, an intense admiration for people who can write. But the works of the naturally gifted writers can also be improved by a practical knowledge of the subject about which they write. A fountain-pen can go wherever it is pushed, but the hard facts of life decline to be pushed. A

clever writer can build new worlds with words. When, however, one are dealing with human beings, it is a different proposition altogether. Building then becomes a slow and difficult process. There are so many different architects with ideas of their own, and a belief in their rightness, as deep and perhaps deeper than one's belief in one's own plans.

My short political experience convinced me that public speaking should form part of the normal system of education. Not that we want thousands of speakers turned on to the long-suffering public. But we do need more men and women who can express their thoughts in decent order, when the occasion arises. I have found no mental discipline like trying to prepare and deliver a speech, no matter how short it may be nor how elementary the subject. Such a training which includes a course in elocution would be an asset to anyone, no matter what their occupation in life. It teaches one to put one's thoughts in order, to express them simply, and deliver them in an inoffensive way so that they can be heard without effort. Political meetings are sparsely attended, chiefly I believe because speeches delivered at them have been bad. The public to-day reads, and listens-in, to first-class speakers on the wireless, and will not, therefore, sit and listen to indifferent speakers, ill-informed and without the art of making their subjects interesting. Churches are in many cases empty for the same reason. Too many clergymen seem to think that a string of platitudes strung together with religious phraseology, and delivered in accents that can only be described as ridiculous, constitute a sermon likely to attract the young folk of the present age.

The modern salesman is taught how to present his goods in an attractive manner; how to explain in convincing language the uses and values of the goods he is trying to sell. If a commercial traveller were to approach a potential buyer with the hesitating and stuttering manner of many public speakers he would not go very far. If he were to

endeavour to sell his wares in the way in which some of our parsons present their message he would be treated as a bad joke by the least critical of his clients.

On the other hand, if the men of business gave more time to public work and the study of the greater issues of public note they would be the gainers in many ways. The busy man engrossed in some particular occupation is always liable to become narrow-minded. Too many business men can only see and appraise political questions with the limited vision of sectional interests. It is possible in business—or in the professions—to concentrate so long and so intensely that one cannot see the wood for the trees. It is possible by continuously overstressing the immediate business of the hour to lose contact with the general trend of events and so be left behind wrestling with problems that have become irrelevant.

Whilst in the Army I met many types of men not usually met with in the commercial world, and during the time I spent in public work I encountered all sorts and conditions of men with whom I should have no contact in the ordinary course of my normal activities. These observations may seem trite to many, but experience has made it apparent to me that they are overlooked by a great number of men and women brought up to believe that the advice 'mind your own business' excludes many activities which are really part of their own business, though not perhaps obviously so.

Since my first visit to Ashridge, already described, I have made a point of attending the courses there at regular intervals. So long as the College is conducted on the present excellent lines, I hope to continue to do so. I am sure that any man normally occupied for the greater part of his time with his profession or business would find a stimulant, a mental tonic, at Ashridge that he cannot find elsewhere. I remember during the years I spent in the Army being impressed by the system of short courses

arranged to give instruction in various military subjects to which we were sent periodically. I thought so highly of these courses and the excellent results obtained by them that on my return to civil life I tried to interest certain quarters, with a view of arranging similar courses for business men. Not, of course, on military subjects, but in various technical subjects connected with business, to which managers and others might be sent to have their knowledge refreshed, and to help them keep up to date in the trades that occupied them. Ashridge does provide courses of this kind in political and economic subjects, covering such a wide range as to ensure something of interest to any man engaged in business, whether or not he has been previously interested in political problems. Modern political questions cover most of a man's normal day to day activities. He may disclaim any interest in politics, but generally when doing so he is thinking in terms of the specialized political subjects that formed the matter for the old party fights of our grandfathers. It would be extremely difficult to-day to distinguish between the affairs that concern the politician and the man of commerce. Economics form a great part of the politician's problems, and are the same as those the industrialist must solve. Thus the industrialist, the bank manager, the lawyer, or accountant will find at Ashridge his own subjects dealt with by informed men—dealt with perhaps from a new angle. What is perhaps even more important, he will meet men and women of all classes from all parts of the world with whom he may discuss any questions arising out of the course he may be attending. I know of no other institution where there is gathered together such a variety of types, where one is so likely to hear expressed different views on the subjects that are of interest to all citizens of a modern state.

It is impossible to overemphasize the fact that to-day, and as far as one can see in the years to come, the whole democratic system, is being, and will be, challenged. This

does not mean that the challenge applies only to those activities concerned with the government of the country. Every activity, industrial and professional, conducted in the past by free men, on more or less free lines, comes within the scope of this modern challenge. The manner of our lives from dawn to night is subject to intense criticism. There are forces at work that would alter fundamentally all those details and principles of our daily business that we have taken for granted, and considered essential to our well-being. Such a challenge cannot be met by an uninformed argument, nor brushed aside by a haughty shrug of the shoulders. We cannot take refuge indefinitely from our responsibility in these new problems by shuffling it on to 'those damned politicians.' Nor can we hide behind our preoccupation with our own particular affairs unless we are prepared to wake up to find that our affairs are suddenly no longer ours. That whilst we have doped ourselves with conscience-solving phrases about 'having no time for politics' and being too busy with our living to earn to bother with such questions, these very private and intimate affairs of ours have been taken out of our hands.

The average business man's contact with the expert economist, or those engaged wholly in matters concerning the government of the country, is very slight. The normal opportunities for the exchange of views between such people are rare. All too rare if they are to keep that touch so necessary to all concerned. The Member of Parliament finds too little time for heart-to-heart talks with the various representatives of industry, agriculture, and the professions in their constituencies. They must of necessity occupy a large part of their time with the local political organizations, for they have their seats to win and keep. In the informal atmosphere of a course at Ashridge it is possible for the politicians, industrialists, and representatives of all other activities to meet and discuss those questions that are of mutual interest. After listening to the lectures, which act

as a stimulant for discussions, the subjects under review can be thrashed out in a personal way, so much more valuable than any amount of writing or reading.

In my youth I had always prided myself on my advanced views. Like so many youngsters I took little trouble to disguise my contempt for the views of those whom we regarded as old fogies. It surprised and upset me not a little when my father once said, during a friendly discussion: "You are a born Tory through and through." It was one of those statements, unexpected and sudden, that act as a mental shock. One of those views of ourselves expressed by another that seem, at first, so utterly false, so absurd, but which continue to reappear in the mind long after we thought it had been dismissed. I had no objection to being described as a Conservative, that was quite a harmless and respectable description, one which could be qualified with the addition of 'advanced,' the term 'left wing' not being the vogue in those days. I was not anxious to be called a Socialist or Radical, because I did not like the look of the Socialists and Radicals I met. I had read Ruskin and delighted in most of his work, but he was known as a Socialist, and that was the thing about him that I did not like. It was in later years that I discovered that Ruskin was a Tory, and I suppose the Socialists made the same discovery and consequently dropped him. It was all very confusing, and my mind was like a jig-saw puzzle, thrown pell-mell into a box. There were bits that seemed intelligible that meant something, but would not fit in with the others. It seemed hopeless to make a picture out of these funny shaped sections, though occasionally three or four pieces fitted together so easily, so neatly, that one felt that the whole picture would be quickly complete. It was on my first visit to Ashridge that the political part of my mind began to sort itself out. It was during a lecture by Keith Feiling that the first little set of odd pieces of my jig-saw puzzle fell naturally into place, increasing the area

of my picture. I remember my excitement as my mind placed the bits side by side. I wanted to stand up and shout 'wait a minute, you are going too fast, and there are dozens of bits to place, but I need time to turn them round and round.' Then came Arthur Bryant and another area was fitted together. It seemed so simple. He was saying things, again too quickly, but still exciting things, that I felt I had been trying to think out, without success. I wondered if the other students were having these experiences, or was it that I was unduly ignorant and uninformed. It was this thought that kept me quiet when I was literally aching to ask endless questions. I was discovering for the first time the meaning of the Conservative faith. Purely intuitive sympathies were becoming rationalized under the influence of men who were scholars.

I was like a man walking in a country, without a guide, who meets with another with a far greater knowledge of the district, one who pointed out paths across the fields that lead to new and unexpected scenes quite close to the one he was following.

I had come to learn of political affairs, but was learning things that seemed more important than the contemporary problems that were the subject of the ordinary political meeting. I realized that in the past a great deal of my time had been spent in trimming topwood, now I was having lessons in root-pruning.

Though the student will learn much from the brilliant lecturers staged at Ashridge, far more can be learnt from the students. This amazing collection of people, gathered from all parts of the Empire, must surely be unique. All shades of opinion, from the deepest to the palest blue, from the whiteness of Blanco to those intriguing shades that show blue or red, according to the way the light shines on them, forgather in the College. A few moments spent in the canteen after a lecture will dispel for ever the popular illusion that the British is a silent race. One might have to

spend considerable time and energy to discover how different are the people of the north from those of the south, how unlike the west-country people are those of the eastern counties. At Ashridge you find them all thrown pell-mell together, arguing, explaining, discussing their differences with a heat that suggests a meeting of men and women of different countries. Writers might sit for hours in the lounges, studying the various types of students, without a chance of exhausting the almost endless variety. Students who attend the courses regularly become quite clever at attaching the correct label to their fellows, after a very short acquaintance. At question time after a lecture the newcomer unsuspectingly tells the very shrewd audience the kind of fellow he is. There is the bronzed man with the neatly clipped moustache, who prefaces his question with 'When I was in Poona,' and proceeds to tell his life story, until gently but effectively checked by the chairman. There is the lady who asks the distinguished economist if he will explain the laws relating to the gold standard in a few words, and all those amusing people who seem quite unable to distinguish between a speech and a question. At times the lecturer finds himself in very deep water, for the Ashridge audience can be devastating, one never knows what kind of an expert may be lurking in that gathering of people called students, a description which is occasionally misleading. Though the life of the College is as yet very short, it has already been responsible for starting many men and women in useful and interesting careers, whilst not a few of its students have shown promise of a brilliant future. Side by side with the serious work runs a vein of humour that is a characteristic feature of the best English men and women when engaged on any job of importance. There is a story told of a young student who returned to her home delighted with her first experience of political education and who informed her people that she had learnt all about the 'polished corridor.' I remember on one course being

somewhat embarrassed by the deference paid to me by a very serious man lately returned from the tropics. He seemed to be trying to make up his mind to ask me a question. Not accustomed to such respectful attention, I did my best to avoid him and was successful in doing so until the last day of the Course. At breakfast I found myself seated opposite to my differential acquaintance. Leaning towards me during a lull in the conversation, he asked me, in the manner of one of life's successes to another, "And were you in the honours list this morning?" I looked at him for a moment quite at a loss to know whether he was serious or merely pulling my leg. He seemed deadly serious, however, and it was apparently a case of mistaken identity. Looking back at him with the most intense expression I am capable of assuming, I said: "No, sir, not this year. I was, of course, last year, and I hope to be mentioned again next year. But," I continued, taking him into my confidence, "I don't think one can allow oneself to appear too regularly without causing a certain amount of unpleasantness in certain circles." Here I paused and looked rather knowing, hoping to give him to understand that people like ourselves, accustomed to the rarified atmosphere of Olympus, were perfectly aware of the circles referred to. "Don't you think so?" I added, eager that he should have an opportunity to share with me my amazement at my moderation. He looked completely stunned and smiled nervously, for apparently he had encountered someone far greater than he had anticipated. I glanced rather apprehensively round the table. I need not have been alarmed, the Ashridge spirit was abroad and my friends were all wearing the correct expression of impressed interest and no one spoilt the atmosphere with the least flicker of a smile.

From time to time I have been either directly or indirectly instrumental in inducing people to try a course at Ashridge. Whenever it happens that I find myself at the College at

the same time as anyone I have had any part in so influencing, I usually make a point of asking them during their stay if they are enjoying their visit. On such an occasion I approached a man whom I thought might be disappointed because I knew he had really decided on a visit for the sake of a friend who wanted someone to go with him. He was not at all interested in politics, I gathered, and there was a chance that he might have been bored. "Well," I said, "I hope you are enjoying your visit and that you have nothing serious to complain about." He appeared a little thoughtful before answering my question, and then said: "I am enjoying myself immensely, but my knees are so sore." "Oh, I said," very mystified, "I am sorry to hear that; have you something the matter with them?" "They were all right until I came here," he still seemed to be thinking. "But," I said, "I never heard anyone complain that Ashridge made their knees sore." "Perhaps not," he said, "the fault is these highly polished floors in the bedrooms and the way the beds slither on the polish."

"Oh, you slipped on the floor; that is bad luck." "No," he continued very solemnly, "it happens when I kneel down to say my prayers. You see, the bed slips away and I have to follow it on my knees, and so I go all round the room until they are nearly skinned." On saying good-bye to him at the end of the Course, I asked: "How are your knees?" "All right now, thank you," he replied very sedately. "I solved the problem by fixing the bed against the wall where it couldn't get away and my knees are healing quite nicely."

CHAPTER III

WEEDING OUR OWN GARDEN

ONE finds at Ashridge many young people sincerely worried by the problems of modern life. They are often remarkably well informed in the theories of the left-wing intellectuals, disturbed by the plausibility of their theories, and unhappy because they are at a loss to discover pat answers to seemingly incontrovertible slogans that these people use in argument. They feel that the Devil has all the best tunes. "We know what we are against, but what are we constitutionalists for?" They ask such questions, sincerely and often pathetically. These young people feel, quite rightly, that all is not well with the world. It is full of injustices. There are so many things that are grossly unfair, and they ask: "Surely something can be done about it?" The left-wing people have an answer for all these problems. They have a scheme for eliminating all the injustices of life. Schemes on which they can talk for hours, and talk well and eloquently at that. Youth is impatient. Youth has a glorious sense of fairness, and Youth, therefore, turns to the people who claim to be able to ensure a spirit of fairness in all men's social relations. It is perhaps one of the loveliest things on earth to see Youth, his eyes blazing with indignation at the injustices of which he becomes conscious as he steps into the arena of unsheltered life. It is a spirit that should be handled with the greatest reverence; to attempt to exploit it meanly seems to be an unforgivable sin. Youth is impatient and wants to do it *now*. It is hard to tell him that though a

great deal can be done now, there is so much that it takes time to do, so much that will not be done in his lifetime. Men may be frustrated quickly, but it takes time to change them. The schoolboy conception of fairness does not exist. Even in his circumscribed world at school, it does not exist even superficially. Jones may play a brilliant game of cricket, he may stand head and shoulders above his fellows on the rugger field, but Smith simply cannot put up any sort of show at either. Brown passed his exams seemingly without effort, but though Robinson works day and night he cannot pass his. Only God knows what is fair, and those extreme left-wing thinkers who have parted with God have finally parted with any hope of justice or fairness.

"Patriotism is wicked. It leads to war and is the cause of all our trouble," said a young lady to me. A young lady educated at one of our best schools, capable and intelligent. These modern intellectuals have been busy disarming youth. They have taken away their faith in God. Religion they say is dope for the people. They have taken away the love of country. They are destroying the family idea. They have robbed us of individuality, and what have we in place of these things that have been everything to man throughout the ages? The Communists offer us a full belly and peace. Eternal peace in which to digest the contents of a full stomach. Pot-bellied images we are to sit worshipping the new god State. "It is the curse of so-called civilization to pretend to originality by the wilful invention of new methods of error, while it quenches wherever it has power the noble originality of nations rising out of the purity of their race and the love of their native land."

To-day patriotism is unfashionable. The bright young things of the intellectual world will worry and tear at the word patriotism like a pack of hounds round a fox. Fashion, however, is notoriously fickle. Though man has changed

his clothes countless times through the centuries, he still works in his garden. Women will poison themselves to attain the fashionable standard of slimness, they may consume miles of lipstick heroically, pluck out the last offending eyebrow, but when their baby comes they will seek shelter and security. Something has happened that directs their attention to the essential and lovely things of life. Man needs a base for all his major operations. He needs a true foundation on which to build, and the simple individual needs an understandable inspiration to keep him sweet and working steadily. The workman digging on his allotment, the clerk rolling the little patch of grass in front of his villa, the youth begrimed but happy tinkering with his motor cycle. All these are happy doing something with *their own*. The pride of possession, the desire to improve, and play with the things that are our own, is a natural thing, it is the basis of that greater pride that extends to our country. This to-day is represented by many modern writers as an evil thing, the cause of war, the cause of that intense nationalism which we are informed should be stamped out to make room for that general love of mankind called internationalism. Any virtue carried to excess may become a vice, and so the natural desire to possess may be allowed to develop into greed. It is possible for a man to be so engrossed in the desire to save his soul that he renders himself blind to the claims of his fellows, or in his passion to save the souls of others he may fail to recognize his own faults. The true patriotism has its roots in the home, in which quite limited sphere a man has ample opportunities to exercise and develop all the virtues of citizenship. The greater love of all mankind may grow out of his love for his own, and his respect for the rights of his neighbours. 'If each before his own door swept, the village would be clean,' and the task of keeping the door-step under our own control up to a decent standard is enough for a great number of us to undertake. He that is faithful in small

things is more likely to make a successful job of the greater than the man who is so busy telling the world what it ought to do that he has no time for the work at hand. There is a certain type of mind that hates to be reminded of the simple but essential individual obligations. They would rather *think* in millions than repay the sixpence they borrowed. The big but fluffy idea will always attract those who would have us believe that their minds are too big to be occupied with the practical details of life, and yet if all did sweep before their own door-step the village would actually be clean, and a number of bye-laws would automatically become superfluous. Moreover, the experience gained by the practical work of sweeping our door-step would assist us to give sound advice on the subject to those unable to deal efficiently with their own. As people are generally more influenced by example than advice, it is possible that the spectacle of a village in which the door-steps were beyond reproach might inspire the inhabitants of other villages to indulge themselves in that form of flattery that is generally accepted as the most sincere. The true and useful patriotism seems then to be a practical virtue beginning in the simple process of weeding our own gardens, refraining from throwing our rubbish into our neighbours', cleaning our own house, making it beautiful, keeping our own family, respecting their various personalities and demanding the same from them. Here surely there is opportunity enough to exercise all the love, restraint, and unselfishness that man is usually capable of. The discipline and experience acquired in these homely mental exercises must of necessity make us good neighbours, useful citizens and capable of bringing to bear on the question of international relations sane and generous judgments. A happy and contented country has the most to lose by war. The man who owns his own house fears fire most. The man who has a stake in the country will not willingly gamble with its fortunes. Nor is the desire

for possession an evil thing, for the motives that actuate men are various, and probably the real urge to possess arises from the wish to have somewhere in which to express one's own individuality. Man's pleasure in his own garden does not arise from mere greed, but from the fact that here at least he may express himself. Plan it as he likes, cultivate the flowers and vegetables that attract him most, in fact rule as an absolute monarch in his little kingdom. As it is restrictions do now limit his freedom, but he has a measure of liberty that allows some considerable exercise of choice. The Socialist would have the land controlled and its use dictated from a central authority. He advances efficiency and economy to support his policy—being unable to realize that men weary of being nagged to become efficient. It is impossible to guard against mistakes, nor is it desirable, for by our failures we learn wisdom, and he who is afraid to make a mistake is not likely to achieve anything. Again, when the Socialist insists on efficiency we would like to know clearly what he means. Efficient for what purpose? There are efficient thieves, efficient forgers and capable rogues of all kinds. Economy of what? Is it the greatest business in life to economise in material things? Surely it is possible to feed the body and starve the spirit. There is an old Eastern proverb that says: 'If a man has two loaves let him sell one and buy a lily.' There are some to whom the flower is essential, who would rather risk an empty belly than forgo their chance of catching at some beauty in life. It is character that makes a race great. The material things are added or not, as character requires them. Man will fight for an idea, but it must be one that has its roots in his experience, and there must be times of rest, for man cannot live eternally on Olympus. In so far as material things are symbolic they are real and valuable. A house and garden may mean a host of inexpressible but vital things to the owner that cannot be conveyed to another. When we speak of 'our country' we do not only

mean the particular area of earth on which we happen to be born, for a barrowful of soil from France is very much like our own. What we do mean cannot be written because every man hears a different melody in the wind in the trees.

If we allow the sneers of the modern intellectuals to deter us in our insistence on the importance of Patriotism, we shall lose the most vital appeal that we possess. The simple appeal that ordinary men and women can understand, to which they react naturally and sincerely. They know that those who are incapable of taking care of their own possessions are not likely to be successful when put in charge of the property and interests of others. It is desirable then that the people should be given every facility to own their property, for in this way a seed-bed is created for the growth of that real and practical Patriotism that turns the flippant and superficial into citizens possessing a true sense of responsibility. If there is to be anything in the nature of the ideal state it must be grown naturally from below—out of the efforts of individuals. It cannot be imposed from above. People cannot labour intelligently for what they do not understand. It has been said that the worth of a civilization of a nation can be gauged by the fixity of its population. If this is true then the people should be given reasons for wishing to remain in their homes. Personal property, a family, and opportunity to express oneself, together make the most effective anchor.

Our country must be beautiful, and if this is to be so a sense of the beautiful needs careful and consistent cultivation, and this can be done naturally without the affectations too frequently associated with efforts to interest people in the Arts and Crafts. One cannot help feeling that there is a great deal of superficiality about the ardent internationalist. Does he really believe that you cannot love your country without wishing to go to war about it? We live close to the Scots, the most patriotic race, but we are not always fighting each other. The Swiss are generally admitted to

be an intensely patriotic race, but they are certainly not aggressive and their country has been chosen to house the headquarters of the League of Nations. The internationalist seems unable to believe in the decency of his own countryman's motives, at the same time he has no difficulty in accepting the purity of the motives of men of other races. Such an attitude of mind can only be attributed to a profound ignorance of international history or mere affectation. We are all familiar with that type of person who can find good in all and sundry outside his own family. The busybody whose own home is an exhibition of muddle and incompetence and whose time is devoted to giving advice to others on how to conduct their private affairs ; the person who is bubbling over with kindness and good fellowship when amongst strangers, but who is an unbearable bore within the confines of his own house.

If the love of our own country and the culture that our race has evolved leads inevitably to war, then the same disruptive germ exists in the League of Nations. Man does not fight for land alone, but will take up arms for his principles and fight like a tiger for an idea. We see around us in the aggressiveness of many pacifists, the hardly suppressed desire to use force to ensure the acceptance of the idea that obsesses them. How many bloody wars have been fought in the name of Christianity? This international creed has been made the excuse for every form of cruelty and exhibition of brute force. It is not difficult to visualize a bitter war waged by fanatical supporters of the League of Nations in an endeavour to force their idea upon those who doubt the truth of the principles for which it is supposed to stand. You cannot alter the fundamental nature of man by juggling with words, by substituting the word internationalism for the word patriotism. It is the idea behind the words that matters, and it is in the interpretations of the meaning of words that the cause of war is so often found. Who can say what the word England

means to the many and various men and women who inhabit this island? It may mean nothing to the advanced internationalist, but this does not cancel out all that it means to men and women of a different mental calibre. And though the majority of Englishmen may be inarticulate, it cannot be assumed that they do not react to the sound of the word England, and that this word does not bring into being some feelings difficult of expression mixed with happiness, awe, thoughtfulness, and pride. What is the matter with those who have lost the power to find inspiration in the love of their country and all the name of England stands for? Will men be moved by the cold theory of internationalism who play for safety, safety first and last, when their own heritage is in danger? Is it lack of imagination or absence of faith that makes men try so hard to idealize defeatism? We live in an age when all things are challenged and all sincere men hope that good will in the end come out of this universal overhaul of values. Time was when Englishmen believed that they had a mission in the world, that Empire was 'power held in trust,' that there was good clean work to be done in the world of which the flag was an emblem. To-day many of our young men and women are taught to snigger at that mission, deride our Empire and despise the courage and sacrifice on which it is built. They are taught that war hurts and must, therefore, be avoided at all costs, that peace with or without honour is the only ideal to strive for.

When one contemplates the persistent publicity given to all that is vulgar in modern society, it is not to be wondered at that youth finds itself uncertain of its values. Any young man or woman with a generous heart and a sense of fairness is easy prey for the plausible millennium mongers. We take pains to educate them to think for themselves, to read the best literature and assimilate high standards of conduct, and then turn them into a world where these standards are apparently despised by the

people who are supposed to be leaders in society. Well-meaning and distinguished gentlemen tell the young, at school speech days, that honesty, thrift, hard work, and a team spirit are the qualities that the world appreciates, and will ensure progress and the applause of their betters. A few years in the world outside the school walls soon convinces them that, as Canon Barry writes : ¹ 'The basis of privilege in the modern world is not built on worth or public service, it is quite frankly and brutally money.'

The modern passion for notoriety obscures the fact that there exists a body of men and women of all classes who are sound and sane. Empty drums still make the most noise. The very modesty of the best people places them at a disadvantage and discounts their influence in a world that is drunk with the new methods of publicity. The centre of the stage is usually occupied by second-rate people whose only claim to the spotlight lies in the generous allowance of the two kinds of brass that form the essential part of their compositions. The rapid development of modern industry has divorced too many people from those great sources of wisdom, the Land and the Sea. Under modern conditions wealth and its attendant power can often be amassed quickly and without sweat. A combination of trickiness, quick thinking and luck may result in the possession of great wealth. It is natural that the superficial observers of this process should be ready to believe that some attractive millennium can be created by the same quick method. The theorist free from the discipline of battling with the forces of land or sea, above the turmoil of the lower ranks of commercial life, gets busy with ideas, with ink and paper. He draws his money from some Impersonal Institution and builds up a system of life that reads well, remarkably well if he has a gift for writing. His systems, however, bear no relation to the realities of life. It is none the less difficult to demolish if cleverly

¹ *The Relevance of Christianity*, page 265.

presented. 'Criticism is almost baffled in discovering the defects of what has not existed, and eager enthusiasm and cheating hope have all the wide field of imagination in which they may expatiate with little or no opposition.'²

The supporters of the Right are handicapped by the word Conservative. The term suggests to young people all that is stodgy and unprogressive. If the name must be retained then it is essential that efforts be made to make our people realize that Conservatism is a National creed, that embraces all kinds of people. It is not the rich man's party as it is represented to be by its opponents. It seems to me that the difference between the parties of the Right and Left is fundamentally one of temperament. It is evolution versus revolution. The people of the Left seem to think that evils can be removed and mankind made perfect by the application of a formula. The Right does not believe that man can be fitted into a cut and dried scheme, nor does it consider it desirable to do so should such a course be possible.

It is of vital importance that young people particularly should realize that the difference between these modes of thought is not a class difference. It is not easy to estimate which party is the greater offender in this habit of unduly accenting the difference between one class of society and another. We most of us take exception to the Socialist efforts to create what they call class consciousness. Decent-minded people detest their efforts to foster hatred between the different sections of the people, and to bring about a class war. Yet we habitually hear people who call themselves Conservatives referring to the working classes as if this term reduced to a recognizable pattern thousands of English men and women, all exactly alike, actuated by identical motives, thinking the same thoughts, living the same lives, and in all respects more like a flock of sheep than a collection of human beings. We hear these people,

² Burke (*Reflections*).

many of whom have no first-hand knowledge of the lives and aspirations of any kind of people outside their own narrow circle, talking about the working classes (a silly term as now used) as if they were a different race from themselves. It is well to remember, in this connection, that men and women of all classes hate to be patronized, and English men and women ought not to have to be reminded of this fact.

The construction of English Society is such that it is impossible to draw a line between any one class of people and another. Society is not static. It is moving, changing, rising and falling like the particles of dust in a beam of sunlight. There are as many variations in what some choose to call the working class as there are in the rest of society. This class business is overdone, overemphasized and talked about far too much. It seems to me that one of the greatest attractions of a real democracy lies in the ever-widening area of real culture. The ever-increasing number of people it produces capable of finding amongst themselves affections based on common tastes, thoughts, and desires. Exclusiveness means loneliness, the right kind of democracy means companionship, the friendliness of people made more equally aware of the worth-while things of life. Differences there always must be. It is the light and shade that makes the picture possible. It is the colours and their tones and values that renders the landscape lovely. If it were possible to reduce mankind to one level it would indeed be hell. Only the supreme egotist really wishes to re-mould the earth to his own particular desire. I do not think that the essential differences between man and man are a cause of unhappiness. It is the open or implied assertion of superiority by any individual or section of society that is the cause of irritation. We are affronted, when by implication we are denied our individuality. However faint our personality may be, we hug it to ourselves as something very precious. The idea of the importance to ourselves

of our own particular personality is expressed in such common sayings as 'one can't call one's soul one's own.' 'Next you will be telling me what I am thinking.'

When anyone prefaces his remarks to me by the words 'You Manufacturers' I want to stop him immediately and ask him if he thinks that all manufacturers come out of the same mould. To inquire whether he imagines that my thoughts, desires, ambitions, likes and dislikes, are shared by every man who happens, from a hundred and one different causes, to get his living by manufacturing something, manufacturing anything from railway wagons to Yo-Yos.

There is the type of Conservative who seems to think that the whole duty of his party is to invent and maintain a system that will consolidate for all eternity, for himself and his descendants, any privileges, or possessions, that may be his, irrespective of his personal merits, or capacity, or the urgent needs of the country as a whole. In other words to create a form of insurance against all and every risk of life. By so doing to rob life of its adventure and attempt to stem the tide of evolution. To ensure that a man can enjoy and keep the fruits of his labour is one thing. To protect the legitimately earned or inherited property is good. There must, however, be certain qualifications and modifications. We cannot make laws that will stand for all time, for though it has been written that 'The laws of the Medes and Persians altereth not,' yet to-day no one knows nor cares what they are. The Medes and Persians and their laws have had to give way before the weight of marching humanity.

It is no part of the Conservative faith to conserve what is bad and what has ceased to fulfil any useful purpose. The Conservative examines the new in the light of past experience, asking himself the questions, 'Will it work?' 'Is it practical?' 'Is it actually an improvement, or merely a change?' 'Is it a new suit made without regard to the measurements of the man who is to wear it, is it merely

a reach-me-down that will not fit?' In the light of past experience, because the Conservative does not dismiss our millions of ancestors as a collection of half-wits, he has an historic sense, and can appreciate the value of the legacy they have handed on to us. He realizes that any nimble brain can work out an attractive and plausible theory on paper, but that our civilization, such as it is, is not a theory but the result of hundreds of years of patient toil, experiment, and sacrifice. He sees life as a jig-saw puzzle that needs infinite patience to put together, knowing that attempts to force the pace means breaking the delicate pieces that must be fitted together to make the whole picture.

In so far as we can live the Conservative faith, we have the advantage of the Socialist, who lives on hope, hope of a millennium to come, which is always in the future but never capable of being enjoyed, even in a small measure, in the present time.

We have to remove the idea so widely held that Conservatism stands for stagnation, that it is the philosophy of well-endowed old gentlemen, and the smug middle-class ladies of independent means who seem so perturbed at the idea of those less lucky than themselves having more of the good things of life. We have to make the young people realize that within the party there is adventure, progress, in the real sense of the word, and an infinite number of opportunities to serve their country and humanity at large. That true Conservatism means real freedom, real liberty, in so far as these things are possible to human beings. Not the freedom to be offensive to others, not liberty to be rude, in the mistaken notion that by so being we are asserting our independence of character.

Freedom to develop ourselves in our own way, free from unnecessary restrictions. Liberty to live the kind of lives we wish, not as slaves of the State machine with our life's task allotted to us. Liberty to try, to fail, and start again in

the adventure of life, to hold what we earn, and to work out our own millennium in our own way, for one man's meat is another's poison, therefore we must have freedom to choose.

Socialism is slavery, the equality of man a myth, and the idea that it is possible to create a heaven upon earth by Act of Parliament, pure childish nonsense.

It is not enough to lay bare the fallacies of government by rule of thumb. We must give our people a constructive creed. We must give them something to fight for, to live for, something that possesses colour, beauty, charm. Something to set off against the dreary thing called Socialism that seeks to regulate every minute of our lives, to reduce us to mere cyphers, slaving for the State, not doped by religion, but drugged by the hope of an undefined millennium that substitutes words for life, theories for real experience, and a dull grey toneless intellectualism for the rich happy colours of varying and fully developed human personalities.

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THE old stoker moves towards the cord that starts the factory buzzer blowing. 'Once more and once less,' he says, as he pulls it. There is a rush of steam and the deafening note of the buzzer echoes round the buildings.

Young men and girls are jumping on to their cycles, whilst the older men fill their pipes as they set off sedately for their homes.

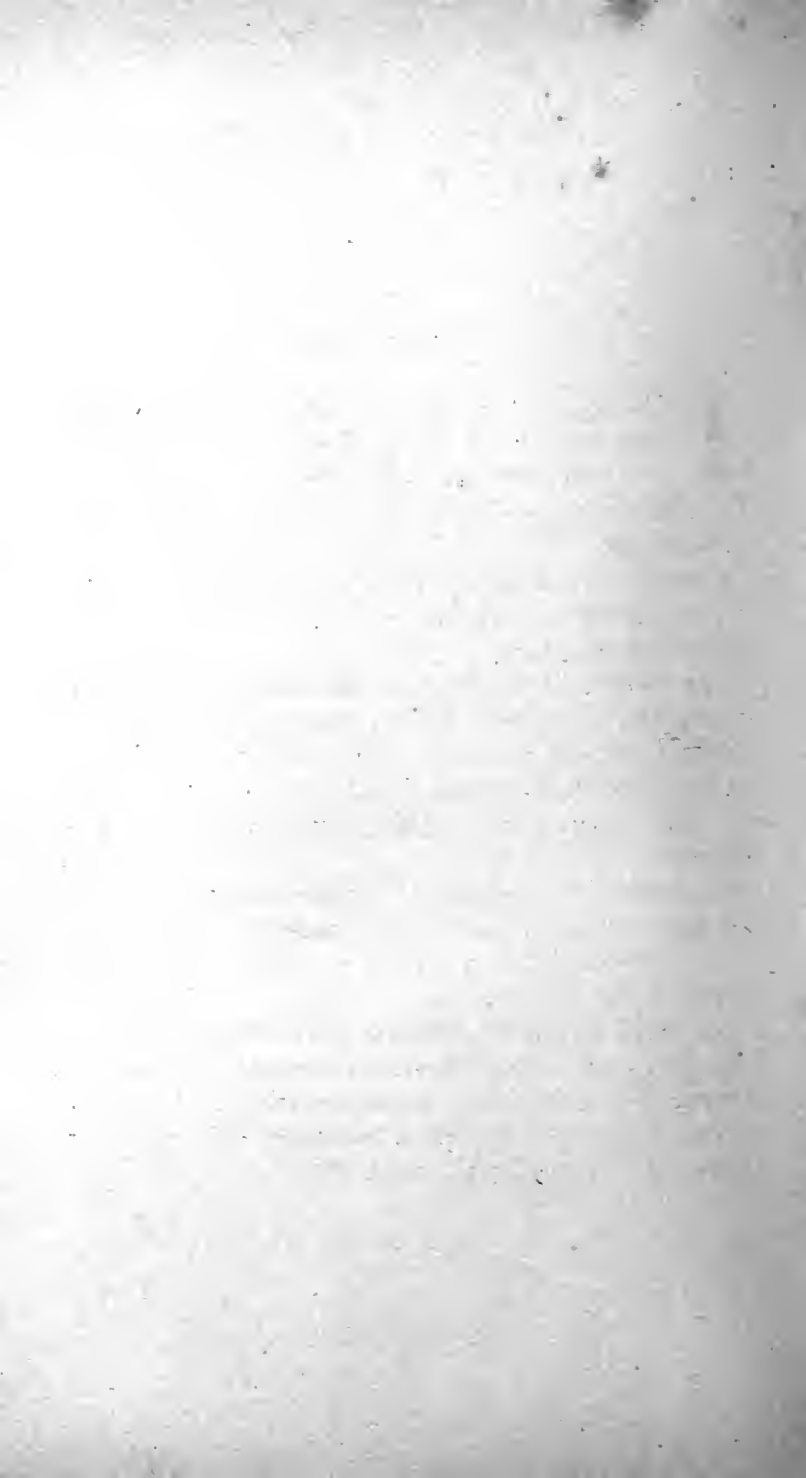
The street is all movement as the building empties itself of its mixed personnel. In the factory the whir of the machinery dies away and the shafting slows down gently; the spokes of fast-running wheels become suddenly visible and there comes over the huge ugly rooms a strange stillness.

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